



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards
in Education

Greenhead College

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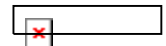
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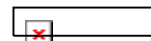
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Basic information about the college

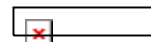


| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Name of college: | Greenhead College |
| Type of college: | Sixth form college |
| Principal: | Martin Rostron |
| Address of college: | Greenhead Road Huddersfield West Yorkshire HD1 4ES |
| Telephone number: | 01484 422 032 |
| Fax number: | 01484 518 025 |
| Chair of governors: | Elizabeth Ryan OBE |
| Unique reference number: | 130538 |
| Name of reporting inspector: | Alan Hinchliffe HMI |
| Date of inspection: | 12-16 January 2004 |

Part A: Summary



Information about the college



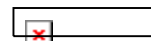
Greenhead College was established as a sixth form college in 1974. It is located on a single site near the centre of Huddersfield, within the Kirklees metropolitan district. Within Huddersfield, there is another sixth form college and a general further education (FE) college. A concordat between the three colleges was agreed in 1998, with the aim of providing a comprehensive curriculum for the local community whilst enabling the colleges to focus on their specialisms. Greenhead College has 11 local partner schools catering for pupils aged 11 to 16. The proportion of students achieving five or more grades A* to C in general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) examinations in Kirklees is around 5% below the national average.

The college provides advanced level courses for full-time students aged 16 to 18. There is no provision for adults. Twenty-seven subjects are offered at advanced subsidiary level (AS level) and general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level). There are three advanced vocational certificate in education (AVCE) courses. The college has an extensive enrichment programme. The college has established a national reputation, partly as a consequence of its students' achievements, and partly as a result of its systems for raising standards based around the A-level performance system (ALPS) that originates from the college, and was awarded a Queen's Anniversary Prize in 1996.

The college has grown rapidly from around 550 full-time students in 1993 to 1,680 at the time of inspection. The college is heavily over-subscribed. Around 55% of the entrants each year come from the college's eleven partner schools. All students from these schools are guaranteed a place at the college, provided they achieve five GCSEs at grade C or above, including either English or mathematics. The remaining students are selected on a competitive basis from a wide area throughout Kirklees, the neighbouring borough of Calderdale, and further afield. These students arrive with very good GCSE results. There are significantly more female students than males. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is in line with that of the local population.

The mission of the college is based around its philosophy of valuing each individual, being a centre of excellence, and concentrating on advanced level provision. It seeks to provide a supportive environment in which individuals feel valued, grow in confidence, and fulfil their potential for academic, moral, social and physical development.

How effective is the college?



The quality of much teaching and learning at the college is outstanding. Inspectors judged that provision in nine of the ten curriculum areas inspected is outstanding, and it is good in the remaining area. The college's key strengths and areas that should be improved are listed below.

Key strengths

- students' outstanding achievements

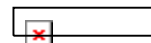
- the exceptional value that the college adds to students' progress
- high quality of teaching and learning
- impressive standard of students' work
- focus of all staff on caring for each student as an individual
- outstanding procedures for monitoring and improving students' progress
- excellent academic support for students
- collaboration between managers, teachers and students in raising standards
- strategies for ensuring that teachers can focus on their teaching
- students' participation in a wide range of extra-curricular activities
- senior managers' communication with staff and students

What should be improved

- social areas for students
- access to the main building for students with restricted mobility
- arrangements for identifying and supporting students with specific learning needs

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

Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas

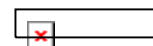


The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum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

| Area | Overall judgements about provision, and comment |
|---|---|
| Biological sciences | Outstanding. Students' achievements in examinations are outstanding. Teachers use a very wide variety of techniques to engage students and to reinforce their learning. Academic support for students is excellent. Teachers work very well together to ensure high-quality provision. |
| Physical sciences | Outstanding. Pass rates are excellent, and most students achieve high grades. Students benefit from enthusiastic and challenging teaching, accompanied by an excellent range of resources and some innovative use of information and learning technology (ILT). Academic support for students is outstanding. Leadership is very strong, and there is a constant focus on the continuous improvement of teaching and learning. |
| Mathematics | Outstanding. Pass rates are very high, and most students achieve grades A or B at advanced level. Students make excellent progress in comparison to their prior attainment. Very good teaching, rigorous monitoring of individual students' performance and outstanding academic support lead to very high standards. Leadership and teamwork are outstanding. |
| Business studies and economics | Outstanding. Pass and retention rates are very high and students achieve higher grades than predicted from their previous attainment. There is excellent integration of current business practice in teaching and learning, which leads to work of an impressive quality. Students receive excellent academic support both within and outside lessons. Curriculum leadership and teamwork are outstanding. |
| Information and communications technology | Good. Pass and retention rates are good on all courses, although pass rates declined on AS-level courses in 2003. Computing students achieve very well, but some ICT students do not achieve the grades of which they are capable. Teaching and learning are good. Support by teachers within and outside lessons is very good, although some students' coursework is insufficiently rigorously monitored. |
| Visual and performing arts | Outstanding. Students' achievements are outstanding, with most students achieving grades A or B in AS-level and GCE A2 examinations. Teaching is enthusiastic and often inspiring, encouraging students to develop very good skills in art, music and drama. Courses are well planned to enable students to develop a wide range of performance and artistic skills. Leadership and management are very good. |

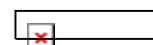
| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Humanities | Outstanding. Pass rates, retention rates and the proportion of students achieving high grades are outstanding. Most teaching is very good or outstanding, and students enjoy their learning. The standard of students' work is high. Very good leadership ensures that there are excellent learning materials and that students receive high-quality support. |
| Psychology and sociology | Outstanding. Students' achievements are outstanding, with most students achieving grades A or B at GCE A2, and many doing better than predicted by their previous attainment. Lively and imaginative teaching is supplemented by outstanding learning materials. Students are very well supported and develop excellent research, analytical and oral skills. Very good teamwork has a strong focus on the continuous improvement of teaching and learning. |
| English | Outstanding. Provision in English is outstanding. Dynamic leadership of an able, enthusiastic and committed team of staff leads to sustained excellence in examination results. Teaching is stimulating and challenges students to reach their full potential. Students enjoy their studies. |
| Modern foreign languages | Outstanding. Pass rates, and the proportion of students achieving grades A or B, are consistently high. Value added data demonstrate that many students achieve better results than those predicted for them on the basis of their prior attainment. Teaching and learning are of a very high quality. Resources are very good and are used effectively. Leadership and management are very good. |

How well is the college led and managed?



Leadership and management are outstanding. Examination results are excellent. Pass and retention rates are very high and, overall, students do far better than predictions based on their prior attainment at school. There is an exceptionally large proportion of good and very good teaching. Participation and achievement in enrichment activities beyond academic courses are outstanding. The support that teachers give their students is exceptional. Expectations of both students and staff are very high. A framework of clear accountability is implemented to ensure that staff and students give of their very best. Self-assessment arrangements are simple, but effective. Data on students' progress and achievements are used very effectively to raise aspirations and standards. Staff at all levels are totally committed to the college's values and aims. The college's commitment to equality of opportunity is reflected in its focus on each individual. Resources are deployed so as to have maximum impact on teaching and learning. Teaching costs are high and administration costs are low. Financial health is strong. Governors and senior managers give clear direction and systematically monitor attendance, retention rates and progress.

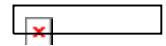
To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?



The college's response to educational and social inclusion is good within the context of its mission. The college's emphasis on the value of the individual is reflected in all aspects of its work. Students come from diverse backgrounds, and the individual support they are given is exceptional. The

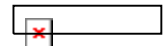
achieve the minimum entry criteria. The college has revised its equal opportunities policy in response to both the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA) and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. The college has made satisfactory progress in the implementation of its equal opportunities action plan, and monitors all aspects of its work effectively. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups reflects that of the local population. The college is involved in projects to raise aspirations in local areas of acute deprivation. Despite recent improvements to the college site, the upper floors of the main building remain inaccessible to those with restricted mobility.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



Students benefit from outstanding guidance and support. Individual students' achievements and aspirations are raised by highly effective academic and personal support. Impartial pre-enrolment guidance ensures that students are on the right courses; very few students leave the college before the end of their course. Induction is enjoyed by students and enables them to settle quickly into the college community. A team of specialist personal tutors closely monitors the individual progress of each student. Subject support for individual students is exemplary. A comprehensive group tutorial programme covers a wide range of relevant topics to meet individual students' needs. All students benefit from either work shadowing or industry-related project work in the first year of their course. Guidance on progression to higher education (HE) or employment is very good. The college provides good support for students with dyslexia and other identified learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are no systematic methods to identify the additional support needs of all students.

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

- accessibility of teachers and tutors

- interesting, enjoyable and challenging lessons

- expert teachers

- lively atmosphere where everyone wants to learn

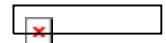
- good food

- wide range of social activities outside lessons.

What they feel could be improved

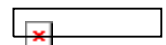
- more social space
- better sports facilities
- a bigger library
- key skills should not be compulsory.

Other information

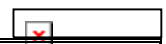


The college inspection report will normally be published 12 working weeks after the formal feedback of the inspection findings to the college. Once published, the college has two months in which to prepare its post-inspection action plan and submit it to the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The 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 should send to Ofsted only action plans from colleges that have been judged inadequate or have been awarded a grade 4 or 5 for curriculum provision, work-based learning and/or leadership and management.

Part B: The college as a whole



Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

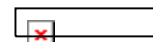


| Aspect & learner type | Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) % | Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) % | Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) % |
|-----------------------|---|---------------------------------|---|
| | | | |

| | | | |
|----------------|----|---|---|
| Teaching 16-18 | 91 | 9 | 0 |
| Learning 16-18 | 93 | 7 | 0 |

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

Achievement and standards



1. Students' achievements are outstanding. The vast majority of students who commence advanced level courses complete them successfully. Overall pass and retention rates are very high, are significantly above national averages, and have improved from a high base over the last five years. The retention rate on advanced level courses reached 95% in 2003. In the same year, pass rates were 96%. Over 60% of students entered for GCE A2 examinations and over 50% of students entered for AS-level examinations achieved grades A or B. In the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) performance tables for schools and colleges in 2003, the average points score per student was 412.3, compared with a national average of 258.6. The average points score per examination entry was 92.2, compared with a national average of 77.4. These figures place the college in the top two sixth form colleges nationally on both measures. Higher grade pass rates on the GCSE courses in English and mathematics are significantly above national averages. The college places a strong emphasis on its enrichment programme. Students' achievements in a wide range of enrichment activities and on short examined courses in information technology (IT) are very good.

2. The college attaches more weight to the performance of its students in comparison with their prior attainment at GCSE than to raw examination results. Value added measures provide more secure judgements about the college's success at GCE A level than students' raw results, because the prior GCSE performance of students at the college is significantly stronger than is the case in most sixth form colleges. The ALPS system devised and used by the college measures students' progress against benchmark data provided by around 100 sixth form colleges. Using this system, the college analyses performance at individual student level, by subject, and by cohorts of students with similar qualifications on entry.

3. Analysis of students' value added achievements shows that, overall, students are doing significantly better than expected in comparison with their GCSE scores on entry. Students make very good progress, regardless of their starting points. Many students with modest GCSE results achieve very good AS-level and GCE A2 results. In most subjects, students' performance indicates that the quality of provision is in the top 25% of sixth form colleges. The grades students achieve in comparison with their predicted grades are particularly impressive in GCE A-level physics, chemistry, biology, mathematics, business studies, history, economics, physical education and psychology. The small number of students on AVCE courses in business studies, and health and social care, also achieve grades far better than predicted. Over the last two years, in virtually all subjects, students have achieved as well as, or better than, could be reasonably expected.

4. The quality of students' work and their achievements has been recognised by a series of awards. For example: music students have won the Young Composer of the Year award; five students on physics and chemistry courses were in the top five nationally for their subjects in 2002; and there has been some success in the international science Olympiads. Students have also won a large number of sports trophies for the college. Most students enter the college with the intention of progressing to HE. Around 90% of students move on to university, some after a gap year. Over the last three years, more than 100 students have won places at Oxford or Cambridge universities.

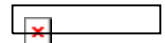
5. During the week of inspection, attendance at lessons was disrupted due to external examinations in many subjects. Evidence both from the inspection week and from college data shows that

attendance and punctuality are very good.

6. The quality of students' work is very high. Inspectors judged that the standard of students' work was good or better in 91% of the lessons observed. Teachers have high expectations of students and expect them to do their best in both their written and oral work. Students respond to these expectations by giving considerable thought to the work they produce and ensuring that it is well presented and detailed. The high quality of the many displays produced by students around the college and in classrooms demonstrates students' justified pride in their work. The college has successfully established a culture in which engagement in intelligent debate and sophisticated written work are valued.

7. In art and design, students are encouraged to be bold and experimental in their work. They produce exciting project work showing real artistic flair, using a range of imaginative materials. Music and drama students perform at a level above that expected of students aged 16 to 18. In the social sciences, students develop a high standard of subject-specific and general academic intellectual skills. Many of the debates in lessons are impressive. In physics and chemistry lessons, students use scientific language confidently and show a good understanding of underlying scientific theory. Biology students' understanding of the social context of their studies illustrates their rounded view of the subject. Modern language students can speak in the target language on a range of issues with confidence. In history lessons, students analyse and evaluate source material very effectively, and reach reasoned judgements on the relative merits of different sources of historical evidence. On business studies courses, the quality of students' project work is frequently exemplary, displaying excellent evidence of independent research using both primary and secondary sources. Students' ability to use and apply topical case studies is impressive. English language and literature students successfully develop higher level critical, analytic and evaluative skills.

Quality of education and training



8. The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 154 lessons. In 91% of lessons, teaching was good or better, and in 56% it was either very good or outstanding. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. Students' learning was judged to be good or better in 93% of the lessons observed. These figures are significantly higher than the average for sixth form colleges inspected in 2002/03.

9. Teachers are experts in, and enthusiasts for, their subjects. They enjoy teaching, and students enjoy learning. In virtually all lessons, no time is wasted. Classes are conducted at a brisk pace, using a wide range of simple but effective techniques to transmit new knowledge and understanding, and to reinforce earlier work. Teachers give considerable thought to planning effective and interesting activities that will motivate students and hold their attention. Students concentrate throughout, partly because the lessons are interesting, and partly because teachers frequently fire questions at individuals to ensure that they are following and understanding. Students are expected to articulate answers to questions in some depth, and are gently discouraged from monosyllabic responses. In most lessons, a combination of whole-class teaching, group work and individual activities is used effectively to maintain students' interest.

10. Many of the lessons observed during the inspection focused on revision for forthcoming external exams. Teachers' expertise in knowing exactly what students needed to know in order to be successful was evident. Both the activities students participated in and the questions they were asked gave opportunities for students of all abilities to demonstrate appropriate levels of knowledge and understanding. Many of the revision techniques were simple but fun. For example, in many subjects, popular television quiz games were simulated in the classroom, or students used hand-held whiteboards to write short answers at speed.

11. Some lessons are inspirational, particularly in physical sciences, visual and performing arts,

humanities and modern foreign languages. In such lessons, a lively and imaginative range of activities is used to engage and challenge students and to create an atmosphere of intellectual excitement. Students become immersed in trying to solve problems or answer questions by drawing on a wide range of background knowledge. Where the teaching is less inspirational, it is just as effective in helping students to learn. The techniques and materials for good learning are present in virtually all lessons, and are not dependent on the virtuoso performance of the teacher. In all subjects, students are expected and encouraged to develop good independent research skills and study habits from the start of their courses.

12. The materials used by teachers are of a very high quality. In most subjects, excellent study guides for each module or topic have been produced by staff. Extension materials for the most able students are frequently included. Handouts are invariably of a high-quality, and good use is made in most subjects of contemporary news stories and other materials that bring the subject to life. Many teaching materials are available on the college intranet, which students can access from home. In many subjects, for example, physics, chemistry, geology, and the humanities, ILT is used particularly effectively to promote learning.

13. Much teaching and learning takes place outside the classroom. Students and teachers work together in shared resource rooms, and students receive individual help and advice from teachers when they are not teaching. The dominant culture of the college is that any subject teacher will use much of their 'free' time to help any student, not just those they teach. Teachers' relatively low weekly class contact hours enable them to devote more time than is the norm to helping individuals. Students, rightly, place a very high value on the amount of help they receive outside of lessons.

14. There are many outstanding teachers. Almost all are full time and hold appropriate teaching and academic qualifications. Many teachers are external moderators or examiners for their subject. Most are very experienced and often organise training for groups of staff from other organisations. There is an excellent recruitment process that focuses on appointing expert teachers. Salaries are higher than the norm for the sixth form college sector. The turnover of staff is low. Staff development is very good; it focuses on improving teaching and learning. Recent activities include sessions on active learning styles and assessment. Staff use opportunities for peer observation to share good practice, build on strengths and constructively suggest improvements to teaching techniques. Teachers' administrative duties are kept to a minimum. Non-teaching staff work flexibly to provide very high levels of support.

15. There has been considerable investment in accommodation since the last inspection. However, accommodation is still congested between lessons. Corridors are narrow and there is a lack of social areas for students. In physical sciences, visual and performing arts, humanities, English, and modern foreign languages, some classrooms are too small for the size of some groups. Access for people with restricted mobility has improved but is still limited in the main building. A new building to open in 2004 will relieve some of the over-crowding. A detailed schedule for further improvement is not in place.

16. The library is very well managed, and its staff are responsive to the needs of students and teachers. Effective communication between subject teachers and the librarian ensures that there is a wide range of current texts, periodicals and video material. The library is small and at times there are insufficient spaces for students to work. Staff and students share departmental resource areas where students receive frequent academic help from teachers and tutors. An excellent reprographics system ensures that staff are able to produce large quantities of very good learning materials. Staff and students have good access to computers. The college website is well designed and contains much useful information about the college. The college intranet contains excellent learning materials in many subjects.

17. There is an outstanding system to monitor students' progress. Teachers and tutors monitor students' progress in relation to demanding target grades predicted by GCSE scores on entry. Students have frequent formal and informal meetings with teachers and tutors to discuss their progress. They are given clear targets and made aware of what they need to do to succeed. Students talk fluently about their progress towards their target grades. Parents and guardians are given accurate information about the progress of students and, in the case of students who are

under-achieving, are made aware of the strategies being used to improve performance.

18. Teachers set homework very frequently: sometimes after every lesson. There is a very clear expectation, which is usually met, that students complete homework to the very best of their ability and hand it in on time. Teachers mark work promptly and give very constructive feedback that makes it easy for students to see where they have gained or lost marks. Informal questioning and assessment in lessons are very good. Attendance and punctuality are monitored meticulously and poor attendance is acted upon promptly.

19. There is no single template for the design and content of schemes of work, although all are clear and contain details of assessment. Moderation and verification of students' work are thorough and carried out with the minimum level of administrative process and disruption to teaching.

20. The college's admissions policy gives priority to students from the eleven local partner schools in the Huddersfield area. The entry requirement for these students is five GCSE passes at grade C or above, including English or mathematics. There are no additional subject-specific requirements. In mathematics, a bridging course helps students to progress from intermediate GCSE to advanced level study. In September 2003, 56% of new students were from the partner schools. The remaining places are offered impartially on the basis of predicted GCSE results, additional interests and subject choices. The criteria are openly communicated and fully understood by prospective students and their parents. The college does not target under-represented groups, but the proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is broadly in line with the local population. Very few students leave the college before completing their course.

21. The formal curriculum offered by the college is narrow, following from the college's mission to concentrate on advanced level programmes for students aged 16 to 18. At GCE A level, there are 33 courses in 27 different subjects. There are also AVCE courses in business, health and social care, and science. GCE A-level general studies is taken by all second-year students and is taught through the tutorial programme. GCSE mathematics and English are offered for students who do not have a grade C on entry to the college. Additional qualifications are available in key skills and a range of IT qualifications. A concordat exists between the three colleges in Huddersfield that seeks to ensure that between them they cater for all students' needs, whilst focusing on their own specialisms. This agreement has some influence on the shape of the curriculum. For example, the college has agreed not to offer media studies courses, whilst the other sixth form college has agreed not to offer geology.

22. All students benefit from the very wide range of enrichment activities and additional qualifications that are available to them. The enrichment programme was awarded the Queen's Anniversary Prize for FE and HE in November 2000. The range of choices is outstanding, and most students do more than one activity each week. A very large number participate in the Duke of Edinburgh Award, voluntary service, drama and music productions and team sports. Students can arrange their own activities with the support of staff. Recent programmes have included snowboarding, an afternoon tea club for local pensioners, and cheerleading. Many students participate in activities that complement their courses, such as community sports leader's awards, text and word processing qualifications, foreign visits, field trips, Olympiad competitions, and educational visits to local industry, universities, theatres and art galleries. In their first year, all students benefit from either work shadowing or industry-related project work for one week during the summer term. The individual placements are carefully matched to meet the needs and career aspirations of individual students.

23. There are good opportunities for students to develop their key skills, which are mapped on to AS-level, GCE A2 and AVCE courses. All students follow level 3 key skills of communication and IT. Additional lessons are timetabled for IT and students have the option to study the key skill of application of number. Personal tutors closely monitor completion of portfolio assignments and extra lessons are available for examination preparation. The number of students achieving key skills qualifications improved in 2003. However, many students do not see the value of key skills unless it is part of their requirements for entry to university.

24. Support for students is outstanding. A team of 20 specialist personal tutors, including senior

managers, is responsible for monitoring and supporting the progress of their students from entry to progression after college. Students value highly the extensive support they receive from subject teachers and personal tutors. All staff are available to help students when they are not teaching. Subject resource rooms and tutors' offices provide good places for students to work with staff individually and in small groups. A study centre has recently been opened to give specialist individual help to students in need of extra support with, for example, English or organisational skills.

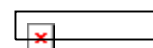
25. Pre-entry information, advice and guidance are suitably detailed and impartial. Links with partner schools are good. Prospective candidates spend a morning in the college to find out about it and about the courses it offers. Considerable time and effort are expended to ensure that students choose the right courses. A well-planned induction system helps students to settle into college quickly. Members of the student council act as guides and help new students to choose enrichment activities and make new friends. Students benefit from a one-to-one meeting with their personal tutor in the first two weeks of term. Detailed monitoring of individual progress and attendance at subject workshops and individual support sessions are effective in improving students' performance. Parents are kept well-informed about students' progress through written reports, consultation evenings and information events, for example, an evening on progression to HE.

26. An effective personal and social development programme is delivered through group tutorials. These are well attended and cover study skills, careers guidance, equal opportunity and health issues, key skills and general studies. An extensive range of well-thought-out activities is used in tutorials. These are reviewed regularly at the weekly tutor meetings. Each tutor group elects a representative to the student council. The student council meets regularly, and its executive committee meets weekly with a senior teacher to discuss student issues and organise social and charity events.

27. Arrangements to guide students into HE or employment are outstanding. An excellent range of resources and well-qualified staff are available in the careers library. Students benefit from good advice and guidance on part-time jobs, gap years, HE and employment. Tutors provide comprehensive support for University and College Admission Service (UCAS) applications and many students are encouraged to apply to university at Oxford or Cambridge.

28. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, such as dyslexia, receive effective assessment and support. For visually impaired students, this includes an early induction to familiarise students with the building before it is very crowded. During the induction process, students discuss their individual learning needs with personal tutors, but occasionally a need for support goes undetected. Routine screening on entry does not take place and on occasions this has led to a delay in providing specialist support.

Leadership and management



29. Leadership and management are outstanding. There is a very clear strategic direction underpinning all the college's work that puts students and their achievements first. Examination results are excellent. Students' grades consistently exceed expectations based on their prior attainment at school. Many more students complete their course than is seen nationally. There is an exceptionally large proportion of good and very good teaching. Participation in enrichment activities beyond academic courses is outstanding. The support that teachers give their students is exceptional. There is a pervasive culture of high expectations of both students and staff. Clear lines of accountability ensure that staff and students give of their very best. Quality assurance procedures are very effective in evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of provision. Any weaknesses are quickly identified and prompt action taken. Staff and students are valued. Praise and encouragement are used systematically to build young people's confidence and to support and motivate staff. Staff at all levels are totally committed to the college's values and aims.

30. All staff share a common purpose. Students, teaching and learning are at the heart of all the college's activities. The college achieves its primary objective of providing a supportive environment in which individuals feel valued, grow in confidence and fulfil their potential for academic, moral, social and physical development. Staff are aware of their own accountability for students' achievements. Teamwork is a feature at all levels. The culture of the college is non-hierarchical, and managers are both consultative and accessible. The principal and vice-principals are highly visible around the college. Leaders of subject areas report directly to senior managers. Meetings are kept to the bare minimum and are frequently poorly minuted. This makes it difficult to follow up some decisions. Nevertheless, communication is very good. Staff contribute actively to discussions about significant changes or new directions. Daily briefings from the principal and bulletins make communication crisp and clear. There is a disdain for bureaucracy. As a result, much administrative documentation is perfunctory. Senior staff are known as the 'admin group'. This consists of the principal, two vice-principals and five assistant principals. Most of them teach. They strive to relieve teaching staff of any unnecessary administration, allowing them to focus entirely on improving teaching, developing materials and supporting their students. Subject leaders are key in maintaining the quality of work at the college. They teach the same number of lessons as their colleagues. Leadership and management are good or better in all of the curriculum areas inspected.

31. The college is nationally renowned for its value added system. This tracks students' progress taking account of their qualifications on joining the college. The value added system is used rigorously to analyse results and highlight areas for improvement. Unexpected results in individual teaching groups or examination papers are identified and prompt action taken. Teachers' accountability for performance is increased by the fact that they usually have sole responsibility for groups of students in their subject. Results are analysed each year in considerable detail and managers systematically monitor progress, attendance and retention rates throughout the year. The chair of governors receives a monthly summary of key indicators on students' overall progress. Self-assessment arrangements are simple, but effective. They provide a clear view of the college's many strengths and areas for development. Some action plans in departments lack detail. Continuous improvement is taken seriously. The views of students, parents and employers are collected and acted upon. For example, after a suggestion from parents, the college set up a group to support those students applying for university courses where competition is fiercest. Judgements about the effectiveness of teaching are based primarily on value added information. A new lesson observation scheme and a teaching and learning group successfully promote the sharing of good practice within and between departments. There are challenging targets relating to students' examination performance compared to their prior attainment at school. Managers have access to timely, accurate data, which is used effectively to inform planning.

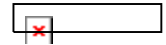
32. Equality of opportunity is inherent in the college mission. There are clear responsibilities for the promotion and monitoring of equal opportunities. The equal opportunities policy incorporates a race equality action plan. It is shared and promoted with staff, students and governors. There is an implementation plan covering three years, although this is underdeveloped. The general studies course, followed by all second-year students, raises awareness of equal opportunity issues. There is close analysis of examination results for patterns relating to gender and race. Retention rates of different groups are not analysed, however. A comprehensive report on equal opportunities issues is shared with governors. The composition of the college's staff does not reflect the ethnic mix of the local community; there are few teachers from minority ethnic groups. The college recognises this and new recruitment arrangements have been agreed upon. The college response to SENDA is satisfactory. Staff have received appropriate guidance. New buildings are accessible to those with restricted mobility, although the main building still has no lift. Lessons are moved to accommodate students who cannot access the upper floors. The college is an active partner in local projects to raise aspirations in areas of acute deprivation.

33. Priorities for staff development are identified through lesson observations, the work of the teaching and learning group, self-assessment and individual staff reviews. Staff development and the sharing of good practice focus on the continuous improvement of teaching, learning and tutoring. A relatively small initial budget is supplemented by income from conferences run by the college. Governors appraise the principal and two vice-principals. Non-teaching staff are appraised annually. Professional development interviews for teachers have recently been re-introduced. Many teachers have not had a formal review for several years. There are formal procedures for the induction and mentoring of new staff.

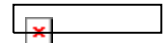
34. The college has addressed the weaknesses in governance identified in the last inspection. There are still some minor procedural shortcomings. However, these are outweighed by the considerable commitment and effectiveness of the governing body. Governors know the college very well. They contribute actively to the promotion of its mission and ethos. They monitor its work closely and do not shrink from challenging managers where necessary. Governors' skills are appropriate to the needs of the college and the composition of the governing body reflects the local community.

35. Resources are targeted to have most impact on teaching and learning. Considerable care is taken in recruiting staff to ensure their commitment to the college ethos. Applicants must supply their students' examination results from previous years to demonstrate their effectiveness as a teacher. Teaching staff are offered higher than average salaries. They teach fewer lessons than is generally seen in sixth form colleges. The rest of their time is spent planning, developing resources and in helping their students. Teaching costs are high, reflecting college priorities. Class sizes are significantly higher than average in the sector. Administration costs are low. Financial management is strong and the college's financial health is good. The college offers very good value for money.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Biological sciences



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

Strengths

- very high pass and retention rates

- the large proportion of students who achieve grades A or B

- students' achievements in comparison with their prior attainment at GCSE

- very wide variety of teaching techniques that effectively promotes learning

- strong academic and personal support for students outside lessons

- well-written and detailed study guides

- o outstanding management and very effective teamwork.

Weaknesses

- o insufficient use of specialist ICT in teaching and learning.

Scope of provision

36. The biology department offers AS-level and GCE A2 courses in biology, Salters-Nuffield biology and human biology. Over 600 students study biology, the largest number of students for any subject in the college. The college has the largest number of AS-level and GCE A2 examination entries in biology of any college in the country. A single award AVCE science course was introduced in 2003 and 17 students are currently enrolled.

Achievement and standards

37. Pass and retention rates are excellent. At both AS level and GCE A2, pass and retention rates have been over 90% in each of the last three years; significantly above the national average for sixth form colleges. The number of students achieving high grades for biology has also been consistently above the national averages in the three years to 2003. For example, in 2003, 76% of students achieved a grade A or B for GCE A2 biology compared with the national average of 40%. Students consistently achieve much better grades than those predicted from their GCSE results. In 2003, 96% of biology students achieved a GCE A-level grade that was equal to or higher than the grade predicted from their previous attainment.

38. Students produce work of a high standard and demonstrate a high level of analytical skill. Practical work is completed competently. Written experimental reports are thorough and include a detailed analysis of how an experiment can be improved. In a good practical lesson, students measured the amount of gas given off during a reaction involving the breakdown of hydrogen peroxide. The results were accurately plotted on a correctly labelled and scaled graph. The detailed analysis of the trends and patterns, and comments on confidence limits, showed a deep understanding of the data.

39. Students are keen to contribute in lessons. They answer questions readily and can link their current work to topics completed earlier in the year. In an outstanding lesson on DNA structures, students demonstrated a high level of background knowledge as they discussed the social and scientific aspects of genetic engineering. In a minority of practical lessons, some students were unclear about the reason for the experiment or about the basic chemistry underpinning it. In 2003, 48% of biology students continued to study a biological science at university, 42 students went on to study medicine or veterinary science and 16 gained a place at Oxford or Cambridge universities.

A sample of retention and pass rates in biological sciences, 2001 to 2003

| Qualification | Level | Completion year: | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 |
|------------------------|--------------|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| AS-level biology | 3 | No. of starts | 190 | 216 | 184 |
| | | % retention | 94 | 95 | 99 |
| | | % pass rate | 98 | 95 | 94 |
| AS-level human biology | 3 | No. of starts | 150 | 152 | 125 |

| | | | | | |
|---------------------------|---|---------------|-----|-----|-----|
| | | % retention | 91 | 93 | 94 |
| | | % pass rate | 94 | 93 | 91 |
| GCE A-level biology | 3 | No. of starts | 194 | 155 | 185 |
| | | % retention | 99 | 97 | 98 |
| | | % pass rate | 100 | 100 | 98 |
| GCE A-level human biology | 3 | No. of starts | 99 | 106 | 98 |
| | | % retention | 96 | 99 | 96 |
| | | % pass rate | 99 | 95 | 97 |

Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

Quality of education and training

40. Most teaching is very good, and some is outstanding. Lessons are well planned and teachers use a variety of methods to help students to learn. They involve all students in lively question-and-answer sessions to reinforce and consolidate background knowledge. Careful prompts encourage students to expand their answers in more detail. For example, a student was able to give a comprehensive description of the digestive system when urged to develop their ideas in more detail. Teaching techniques are simple but effective. In one very good lesson, students learnt about base pairing through constructing paper models of the DNA molecule. In a very effective revision lesson, students were given hand-held whiteboards to write their answers down during a quick-fire quiz in the style of a popular game show. Lessons proceed at a brisk pace, with students working quickly on tasks. The use of ICT to teach biology is underdeveloped. Practical lessons make limited use of computers or other digital equipment such as data loggers for research and analysis. In some lessons, teachers use powerpoint presentations effectively.

41. Students' learning is supported by comprehensive and well-written study guides for each topic. They contain a range of very useful resources, including gapped fact sheets, data tables for completion in lessons, and clear diagrams for students to label correctly. Regular tests are used to identify students who may need extra help.

42. There is a wide range of equipment in the laboratories and a well-stocked library with relevant textbooks for additional research. The science resource centre is a single room for staff and students to work in outside lessons. It contains relevant resources, extension study packs and networked computers with Internet and intranet access. These are used effectively by students for extra information on a topic, revision, and research for project work. Technicians are well qualified and provide good support to staff and students.

43. Students' progress is closely monitored. Homework is set frequently and returned promptly. Students' written work is comprehensively marked and clearly shows what the student must do to improve. Coursework assessments use a common feedback sheet to help students improve their examination technique. Teachers have a termly one-to-one meeting with each student to discuss their individual progress based on their target grade. A series of agreed action points engenders further progress.

44. An extensive range of enrichment opportunities is offered. For example, a group of students wishing to pursue a career in medicine meet to discuss medical ethics, and there is a biology extension group that carries out additional research on topics including microbiology and biotechnology. Students' background knowledge is extended through guest speakers, and regular lectures and demonstrations at Huddersfield University. A large number of students enter the annual Biology Olympiad. In 2003, three students gained gold or silver medals and nine received commendations for their projects.

45. Subject support is outstanding. Students receive much academic and personal help outside

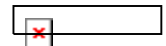
lessons. Details of teachers' free periods are posted in the biology laboratories. Students are encouraged to seek help from teachers to gain a fresh perspective on a particular problem.

Leadership and management

46. Leadership and management are outstanding. The focus is on maintaining and improving students' achievements. There are regular formal and informal meetings to discuss teaching and learning methods. Self-assessment is thorough and is based on a detailed analysis of students' results. It clearly identifies minor weaknesses, particularly in human biology, and actions to continue to improve students' achievements. The biology teachers work very well as a team and share good practice. Lesson observations are used well to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

47.

Physical sciences



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

Strengths

- outstanding pass rates and achievement of high grades

- enthusiastic, motivating and challenging teaching

- innovative use of ILT to enrich and promote learning

- rigorous, regular assessment which reinforces learning

- excellent support for all students

- very strong leadership.

Weaknesses

- no significant weaknesses.

Scope of provision

48. Advanced level courses are offered in AS-level and GCE A2 chemistry, physics and geology. There are nearly 500 students taking courses in chemistry, 200 in physics, and around 80 taking geology.

Achievement and standards

49. Pass and retention rates are outstanding on all courses, and are significantly above the national averages for sixth form colleges. Over the last three years, few students starting courses in the physical sciences have failed to complete them successfully. The majority of students on all courses achieve grade A or B. The proportion of students with high grades is outstanding and consistently exceeds the national average by at least 25%. For example, in GCE A2 chemistry in 2003, 73% of students obtained grade A or B compared with a national average of 47%. The vast majority of students achieve one grade above that predicted by their GCSE results. Students' individual achievements are also outstanding. In 2002, two physics and three chemistry students were in the top five nationally for their GCE A-level exams, and in 2003, there were successes in the highly competitive physics and chemistry Olympiads, with a physics student achieving a gold medal.

50. The quality of students' work is very high. Most students have a well-developed understanding of scientific principles. Students competently use logical and deductive approaches to problem solving. For example, chemistry students use molecular models particularly effectively to develop their understanding of chemical structures. With encouragement from their teachers, most students develop very good independent learning and study skills. At the start of their course, some chemistry and physics students have limited mathematical skills. They are given good support to improve these and raise achievement.

A sample of retention and pass rates in physical sciences, 2001 to 2003

| Qualification | Level | Completion year: | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 |
|-----------------------|--------------|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| AS-level chemistry | 3 | No. of starts | 269 | 264 | 241 |
| | | % retention | 93 | 95 | 98 |
| | | % pass rate | 94 | 95 | 90 |
| AS-level geology | 3 | No. of starts | 23 | 37 | 31 |
| | | % retention | 83 | 92 | 100 |
| | | % pass rate | 100 | 100 | 97 |
| AS-level physics | 3 | No. of starts | 143 | 125 | 113 |
| | | % retention | 94 | 96 | 96 |
| | | % pass rate | 95 | 100 | 99 |
| GCE A-level chemistry | 3 | No. of starts | 208 | 192 | 197 |
| | | % retention | 98 | 96 | 99 |
| | | % pass rate | 100 | 99 | 100 |
| GCE A-level physics | 3 | No. of starts | 88 | 104 | 97 |
| | | % retention | 88 | 99 | 99 |
| | | % pass rate | 95 | 100 | 99 |
| GCE A-level geology | 3 | No. of starts | 21 | 15 | 24 |
| | | % retention | 100 | 100 | 96 |
| | | % pass rate | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

Quality of education and training

51. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Nearly all lessons are good or better, and several are outstanding. Teachers are enthusiastic and teach their subjects in a dynamic and stimulating way that motivates students. There is a strong commitment to maximising the potential of all students. In lessons, students are constantly challenged to achieve more. For example, in a very good chemistry practical lesson, students who were making mistakes were encouraged to work in pairs to identify the errors they were making, and the consequences of using the incorrect method. Teachers use effective question-and-answer techniques to check learning and promote a greater depth of understanding. Tasks are designed to build up increasing levels of complexity in manageable stages.

52. Students enjoy the lively and varied lessons. They are enthusiastic and work purposefully on a wide range of well-planned learning activities. For example, an outstanding physics revision lesson started with a card-matching exercise to form radioactive decay equations, and finished with an enjoyable game to test recall of terms and definitions. Throughout the lesson, students were further developing their understanding and refining their exam techniques. In an outstanding chemistry lesson, students used hand-held whiteboards to experiment with and further develop their understanding of bonding and shapes in chemical structures.

53. ILT is used innovatively to support teaching and learning. For example, a video on titration produced by the chemistry teachers was used very effectively to demonstrate the techniques to a whole class. In an excellent geology lesson, annotated maps and photographs were imaginatively presented in a powerpoint presentation, providing stimulus material for an increasingly complex mapping exercise. In physics lessons, good use is made of an interactive whiteboard to involve the students. On the college intranet, there are crosswords based on physics topics which have been devised by students themselves. A virtual field trip is also available for students of geology to simulate practical work. Sample questions and answers are available on the intranet.

54. Staff are particularly well qualified. Many are external examiners and also work for national organisations. For example, one is a scrutineer for the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority; another is a physics education policy adviser for the Institute of Physics and a consultant to the science team at the DfES Standards Unit. Chemistry and physics are taught in well-equipped specialist laboratories. However, the geology classroom is too small for the number of students in the groups and presents a health and safety hazard. Learning resources, many of which are produced in-house, are of a high standard. Well-written study packs include extension work. The library is well equipped with periodicals, textbooks and videos. The resource areas give good access to the intranet and other support materials for both weaker and more able students.

55. Assessment is regular and thorough. Work is marked promptly and usually handed back at the next lesson. Feedback to students is helpful and encouraging. Students are very clear about what they need to do to improve their examination performance. There is a very strong emphasis on examination success and good use is made of past paper questions.

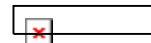
56. Academic support for individual students is excellent. Students appreciate the high levels of support and accessibility of their teachers. A member of staff in each subject is always available to see students in one of the science resource rooms. Many students receive detailed advice and guidance in the teaching areas.

Leadership and management

57. Leadership and management are outstanding. There is an excellent team spirit. Teaching teams are very focused on improving the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers regularly discuss teaching methods and share materials, and peer lesson observations have resulted in much sharing of good practice. Quality assurance activities are effective in raising standards. All staff contribute to

the self-assessment process. Reports are evaluative and focus on maintaining and improving students' very high achievements. There is clear evidence of progress on weaknesses identified in last year's report. Student surveys are carried out regularly and actions take place as a result of students' responses.

Mathematics



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

Strengths

- outstanding pass rates on all courses
- very high achievement relative to prior attainment
- very high standard of students' work
- very good, focused teaching that reinforces learning
- rigorous monitoring of student performance to improve individual achievement
- outstanding academic support
- outstanding leadership and excellent teamwork.

Weaknesses

- no significant weaknesses.

Scope of provision

58. Approximately 500 students are studying AS-level and GCE A2 mathematics. Students can choose from options in pure mathematics, discrete mathematics, mechanics and statistics. Further

mathematics is offered for the more able students, with 41 students following this option. GCSE mathematics is taken by students who have not previously achieved a grade C or better in the subject. There are currently 60 students enrolled on the course.

Achievement and standards

59. Pass and retention rates on all courses in mathematics are outstanding and are well above the national average for sixth form colleges. On all AS-level and GCE A2 courses, pass rates were well over 90% in 2003. On the GCE A2 further mathematics courses, all students have passed in each of the last three years. The retention rate is consistently above 90% on all courses except further mathematics. Most students achieve outcomes significantly better than the grades predicted by their GCSE results. The proportion of students achieving high grades is outstanding: 80% for GCE A2; 69% for AS-level mathematics; and all GCE A-level further mathematics students achieved A or B grades in 2003. Pass rates for GCSE mathematics are over 30% above the national average. Students are encouraged to complete application of number key skills. In 2003, 160 students successfully completed a portfolio at level 3.

60. Students' work is of a very high standard on all courses. In lessons, students clearly demonstrate their mathematical understanding and can apply concepts from previous topics. AS-level mechanics students demonstrated good use of algebraic manipulation and sound previous knowledge of Newton's second law when investigating pulleys. Students used their knowledge of Pythagoras's theorem, sines and cosines confidently to find components and resultants of forces. Students develop their independent study skills well through use of the college intranet and a wide range of other resources, and by regularly completing work outside the classroom.

A sample of retention and pass rates in mathematics, 2001 to 2003

| Qualification | Level | Completion year: | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 |
|---------------------------------|--------------|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| GCSE mathematics | 2 | No. of starts | 59 | 47 | 65 |
| | | % retention | 93 | 97 | 94 |
| | | % pass rate | 75 | 68 | 77 |
| AS-level mathematics | 3 | No. of starts | 292 | 273 | 282 |
| | | % retention | 92 | 96 | 96 |
| | | % pass rate | 89 | 95 | 93 |
| GCE A-level mathematics | 3 | No. of starts | 195 | 175 | 199 |
| | | % retention | 87 | 96 | 99 |
| | | % pass rate | 99 | 96 | 98 |
| GCE A-level further mathematics | 3 | No. of starts | 20 | 25 | 15 |
| | | % retention | 90 | 84 | 87 |
| | | % pass rate | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

Quality of education and training

61. There is much very good teaching, and students learn quickly. Teachers demand high standards of their students, who respond well in return. The pace of lessons is brisk. Essential mathematical concepts are continuously reinforced, and students learn to apply these to a variety of contexts. In a very good statistics lesson, students applied the binomial distribution to the probability of winning prizes on lottery scratch cards. This simple exercise was very effective in enabling students to apply their mathematical understanding to real life situations. In a good pure mathematics lesson, students were introduced to the definitions of secant, cosecant and tangent using their previous knowledge of

quadratic equations and factorising to effectively develop their skills in manipulating trigonometric identities. Teachers carefully check students' understanding, making good use of questions to support weaker students and to challenge the more able. ILT is used effectively to develop mathematical skills. For example, in a good further mathematics lesson on horizontal circular motion, mathematical modelling software was used both to build up accurate diagrams of balls performing horizontal circles in containers of varying cross section, and to reinforce the concepts of resolving forces horizontally and vertically.

62. Mathematics resources are very good. Well-qualified staff use their expertise to good effect. An extensive range of learning materials, including lesson notes, revision work, intranet activities and past paper questions with worked solutions, supports individual learning. A carefully constructed study booklet is available for each module. It outlines the topics covered and includes relevant support materials.

63. The mathematics classrooms and corridors contain attractive displays that are used by students to help their learning. For example, posters showing mathematical puzzles and information on sine and cosine values and on Pythagoras's theorem give the area a clear subject identity and help students to learn. Some classrooms are too small for the size of group and this restricts teachers' access to some students needing help.

64. There is continuous and thorough monitoring of students' progress. Homework is set and marked after every lesson. Constructive feedback is given and students know exactly what they need to do to improve. There is outstanding support for students of all abilities. Students receive very good induction in mathematics. Students who wish to study AS-level mathematics and have completed an intermediate GCSE course at school are offered 'bridge the gap' lessons before the start of term to bring their knowledge up to a higher level. Students' progress is regularly discussed at team meetings. Underperforming students are quickly identified and extra support is available immediately in the mathematics resource room. A member of staff is always available for informal support outside lessons.

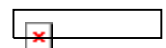
65. There are regular tutorials, extra revision classes, and extension work for students applying to Oxford or Cambridge universities. A wide range of enrichment activities includes visits to universities and competitions such as the British Mathematics Olympiad.

Leadership and management

66. Leadership and management are outstanding. There is a clear focus on teaching and learning, students' achievements and individual support. Staff work very well together to develop resources and share teaching strategies. Lesson observations are used to share good practice. Self-assessment is rigorous and accurate, based on a detailed evaluation of students' achievements. Challenging targets are set to try to maintain or improve results.

67.

Business studies and economics



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

Strengths

- very high pass and retention rates

- students' excellent progress in relation to their prior attainment

- impressive standard of student work

- excellent integration of current business practice in teaching and learning

- excellent academic support for students

- outstanding leadership and teamwork.

Weaknesses

- no significant weaknesses.

Scope of provision

68. The department offers a range of full-time advanced level courses including AS-level and GCE A2 business studies and economics and AVCE business. Students taking the advanced vocational route can study for either the single or double award. There are currently 287 students enrolled on AS-level and GCE A2 business studies; 99 students are studying AS-level and GCE A2 economics; and 36 students are on AVCE business studies courses.

Achievement and standards

69. Students' achievements on all courses are outstanding. Pass and retention rates are well above the national averages for sixth form colleges and have been over 90% on all courses for the last two years. The proportion of students achieving high grades is also above the national average for all courses. Students make excellent progress in relation to their prior achievements. In 2003, students in GCE A2 business studies achieved on average a grade higher than predicted by their GCSE results, and 68% of students obtained a grade A or B compared with the national average of 26%. On GCE A2 economics, the pass rate is also 100%, with 85% of students achieving high grades compared with a national average of 48%. On AVCE business there was a 100% pass rate, with all students achieving high grades, in both 2002 and 2003. In 2002, an AVCE student progressed to read law at Oxford University on the strength of her double A grade.

70. The standard of students' work is impressive. Most students can present, analyse and criticise logical business arguments with intellectual maturity. Written work is detailed and thorough. Project and assignment work clearly shows individuals' extensive use of primary research and analysis of different forms of data. Work is well-presented, and students make good use of IT. An IT key skills project is used to further develop students' independent research skills. Students enjoy individual and group work. They confidently use theoretical models and research into business practices to underpin intelligent class discussions on a wide range of topics.

A sample of retention and pass rates in business studies and economics, 2001 to 2003

| Qualification | Level | Completion year: | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 |
|------------------------------|--------------|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| AS-level business studies | 3 | No. of starts | 162 | 175 | 177 |
| | | % retention | 90 | 94 | 94 |
| | | % pass rate | 99 | 98 | 96 |
| AS-level economics | 3 | No. of starts | 60 | 54 | 59 |
| | | % retention | 93 | 94 | 93 |
| | | % pass rate | 98 | 94 | 93 |
| GCE A-level business studies | 3 | No. of starts | 141 | 106 | 130 |
| | | % retention | 88 | 96 | 99 |
| | | % pass rate | 98 | 100 | 100 |
| GCE A-level economics | 3 | No. of starts | 38 | 38 | 33 |
| | | % retention | 84 | 97 | 100 |
| | | % pass rate | 100 | 97 | 100 |

Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

Quality of education and training

71. Teaching is good or better, and students learn very effectively. Lessons are carefully planned, purposeful, and incorporate high-quality, up-to-date and topical learning materials based on a wide range of business organisations. Extension tasks are provided to consolidate students' knowledge and understanding. Teachers use effective questioning to challenge students for more detailed responses and to generate intelligent discussion. Considerable use is made of past examination questions and teachers' experience as examiners to raise standards and secure grade improvements.

72. A wide variety of teaching methods is used, including discussions, examination of business case studies, simulations and practical activities. For example, in an outstanding AVCE lesson on advertising, students were asked to analyse a number of different advertisements from different media including local sources. This led to a lively and interesting discussion in which students successfully applied marketing theory and their own experiences to comprehensively evaluate the effectiveness of each advert and produce their own promotional campaign. In a very good economics lesson, newspaper articles on the fortunes of various companies were used very effectively to stimulate discussion on a wide range of economic theories and concepts. In a small minority of lessons, students spend too much time copying notes, and few demands are placed on able students.

73. Assessments are well-planned and effective in closely monitoring students' progress. Work is returned promptly with detailed comments that help students to understand what they need to do to improve. Students who are underachieving are quickly identified and receive good support in completing high-quality coursework. Guidance and support are outstanding. Individual reviews are held for all students twice a year. Students discuss with teachers their progress against their target grades. Action plans indicate how students can improve their performance in examinations. Students value the extensive academic support that is freely available to them outside of the classroom. For example, teachers provide additional one-to-one tuition and arrange learning support for those who need it, they help students who miss classes, and they also provide additional resources and guidance for students applying for university entrance.

74. Teachers are well qualified and experienced. Classrooms provide a welcoming learning environment, with extensive wall displays of students' work. Some rooms are too small for the size of

group. The wide range of learning resources includes textbooks, videos and business software and is up to date and relevant. The intranet sites for business and economics are used effectively by students for independent study, research and revision.

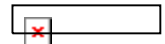
75. The department has excellent links with industry and organises an extensive programme of visits to a range of local, national and European businesses. Local businesses sponsor some of these visits, receiving in return a report on the company visited from students. These visits are a core feature of the courses and are used well by the students to complete their projects.

Leadership and management

76. Leadership and management are outstanding. Course teams are well organised and work very effectively as a team. The department is extremely responsive to students' needs and continuously analyses data on students' progress and achievement. Students' opinions are gathered through questionnaires and focus groups, and changes are made to courses in response to students' views. All staff are involved in rigorous and accurate self-assessment that focuses on raising the standards of teaching and learning and students' pass rates. Communications are excellent. Regular meetings are effective in sharing good practice and teaching materials.

77.

Information and communications technology



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

Strengths

- students' very good achievements on the GCE A2 computing course

- good teaching and learning

- teaching and learning resources

- the support given to students by their teachers.

Weaknesses

- declining pass rates for AS-level courses in 2003

- insufficiently rigorous monitoring of individual students' coursework.

Scope of provision

78. Courses are available in ICT and computing at AS level and GCE A2. There are around 150 students on ICT courses and 60 on computing courses. Over 200 students across the college study text processing for the award of a certificate or diploma as an enrichment to their studies. Students from across the college at AS level are enrolled for key skills IT at level 3.

Achievement and standards

79. Retention and pass rates are above national averages on AS-level and GCE A2 courses. All students on the GCE A2 computing course were successful in 2003, and on GCE A2 ICT, retention and pass rates have been above 90% in each of the last two years. However, pass rates declined in 2003 on both AS-level computing and AS-level ICT, to 85% and 79%, respectively. Computing students achieve significantly more passes at grades A and B than the national average for similar colleges. They also significantly exceed the grade which would be expected of them given their prior attainment at GCSE. However, in 2003, some ICT students achieved grades which were not as high as would be expected when compared with their previous attainment. Students following key skills and text processing courses reach a high standard. Their IT skills are used well in their other subjects.

80. Students develop very good IT skills and many produce high standards of work. They are diligent and motivated, and work conscientiously both inside and outside lessons. Many computing students use their experiences from part-time jobs and personal interests to develop realistic applications which meet the requirements of users. Documented projects are of a high standard. Students learn relevant vocational skills in interviewing and critical analysis of activities. Their designs often show flair and a thorough understanding of users' needs. Many students following text processing courses have identified an IT need in their work in college or in their intended career. For example, prior to studying law at university, a student benefited from gaining extra IT skills for processing legal documents.

A sample of retention and pass rates in information and communications technology, 2001 to 2003

| Qualification | Level | Completion year: | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 |
|-----------------------|--------------|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| AS-level computing | 3 | No. of starts | 50 | 56 | 35 |
| | | % retention | 86 | 89 | 97 |
| | | % pass rate | 100 | 94 | 85 |
| AS-level ICT | 3 | No. of starts | 153 | 122 | 133 |
| | | % retention | 89 | 95 | 90 |
| | | % pass rate | 84 | 91 | 79 |
| GCE A-level computing | 3 | No. of starts | 34 | 30 | 27 |
| | | % retention | 65 | 100 | 96 |
| | | % pass rate | 82 | 97 | 100 |
| GCE A-level ICT | 3 | No. of starts | * | 59 | 71 |
| | | % retention | * | 93 | 99 |
| | | % pass rate | * | 98 | 96 |

Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

** course did not run*

Quality of education and training

81. Most teaching and learning is good or very good. The best teaching involves students learning through individual work which they manage themselves. This work extends their understanding and skill levels through practice. Teachers spend much of their time assisting individual students. Students discuss and share ideas effectively. They enjoy lessons and feel very well supported.

82. Teachers encourage students to think for themselves through careful explanations, and check that they have understood through good use of questioning. For example, in one good lesson, the teacher skilfully employed follow-up questioning so that all students understood stock control and could use their experience of everyday situations to exemplify appropriate techniques. In another very good lesson, students used their skills well to develop IT solutions to everyday scenarios. One student was producing a system to improve the planning of a local music competition. The design allowed the user to enter all competitor and event data, allocate entries, enable search options to easily locate information, and produce a stylised award certificate for the winners. Another student was designing a system to plan a playgroup's scheduling of its staffing and childcare bookings. The design took account of the requirements of both the data protection act and child protection requirements. In many lessons, teachers build good extension exercises into their plans to ensure that all students are challenged and are working productively.

83. In some lessons, the monitoring of students' coursework is insufficiently rigorous. As a result, students are left to pursue solutions that are not likely to work. For example, some students were attempting to implement solutions in which there were design flaws that had not been detected by them or by the teacher. They received insufficient guidance on the important skill of evaluating their own work.

84. High-quality materials including handouts are used effectively to promote learning. Teachers make effective use of the IT and paper-based resources available to provide relevant practical activities to extend knowledge and develop skills. For example, in one lesson, students were using computers to apply their knowledge of validation techniques by developing user screens with appropriate pop-up messages. In several lessons, high-quality software training packages were used well to enable students to work independently to develop practical skills. Students can access the college intranet from their home computers.

85. Assessment practice and the monitoring of learning are good. Teachers moderate each other's assessments thoroughly. Regular homework is given and marked promptly; it reinforces learning from lessons. Feedback on marked work is helpful, and enables students to identify what they need to do to improve. Grammar and spelling are frequently corrected.

86. The availability of IT qualifications as part of the enrichment programme is welcomed by students. A large number of students take the opportunity to acquire IT skills that they will find useful in the future. Much of the work done is geared to students' interests or workplaces.

87. Students are well supported both in and outside lessons. For example, one student had used study support sessions to significantly improve his AS-level project grade by refining his documentation with close guidance from his teacher. There are frequent reviews, at which teacher and student discuss progress, agree actions and set targets. These are not always well recorded. Teachers know their students' needs very well and this inspires students' confidence and trust.

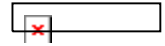
Leadership and management

88. Leadership and management are good. There is a strong focus on improving students' performance. Teamwork is impressive. Good practice is shared effectively. Teachers undertake technical updating frequently, and receive training on teaching strategies and changes in assessment practices. Weaknesses in ICT have been identified through self-assessment and plans to make improvements have been implemented. It is too early to judge the effectiveness of these

actions. Most judgements in the self-assessment report are accurate. The low number of female students on AS-level and GCE A2 courses has not been identified as an issue for specific targeted improvement.

89.

Visual and performing arts



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

Strengths

- very high pass and retention rates

- outstanding proportion of high grades on art courses

- very high standard of performance and art work

- inspiring and enthusiastic teaching

- excellent range of learning activities both inside and outside lessons

- very good resources and outstanding technician support

- very good curriculum management.

Weaknesses

- no significant weaknesses.

Scope of provision

90. AS-level and GCE A2 courses are available in music, art and design, and theatre studies. There

are around 330 students enrolled, with approximately 150 on art and design courses, 100 on theatre studies courses, and 75 studying music. A wide range of enrichment activities is available to all college students, including courses in music technology, bands, choirs, and college productions that embrace all three subjects within the curriculum area.

Achievement and standards

91. Students' achievements are excellent. At GCE A2, all students have passed theatre studies and music courses in each of the last three years, and the pass rate for art and design was 99% in 2003. At AS level, the pass rate was 100% for art and design in 2003, and over 90% for both music and theatre studies. The proportion of students achieving high grades is outstanding. For art and design at both AS level and GCE A2, over three-quarters of students have achieved grades A or B over the last three years as a whole. In all three subjects, students achieve in line with, or better than, predictions based on their achievements at GCSE. Many students with modest GCSE results achieve very good grades at AS level and GCE A2.

92. Students' work is of a very high standard. Students perform confidently, and show excellent understanding of appropriate skills in music, drama and art. Drama students can use space, language and movement to create meaning in theatre and are equally confident devising or working with scripts. They are offered a series of imaginative performance opportunities to develop their skills. For example, a recent production reworked *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as a fight in a boxing ring, drawing on the theories of Bertolt Brecht. Students' work drew together theory and practice and the exercise prepared them very effectively for future examination work. Art and design students produce exciting and highly individual work that is excellently supported by thoughtful workbooks that document the process and refer to the work of a wide range of artists. Students are given a sound grounding in artistic skills, and are also exposed to a wide variety of stimuli. They make major construction pieces, videos and large-scale sculpture. They are surrounded by excellent work by current and past students and their work is celebrated around the college. Music students demonstrate a very high level of performing, composing and technical skills. They understand musical language and notation very well, although sometimes they have started with limited musical expertise.

A sample of retention and pass rates in visual and performing arts, 2001 to 2003

| Qualification | Level | Completion year: | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 |
|-----------------------------|--------------|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| AS-level art and design | 3 | No. of starts | 84 | 98 | 75 |
| | | % retention | 92 | 95 | 93 |
| | | % pass rate | 94 | 99 | 100 |
| AS-level theatre studies | 3 | No. of starts | 62 | 64 | 70 |
| | | % retention | 100 | 92 | 91 |
| | | % pass rate | 98 | 100 | 94 |
| AS-level music | 3 | No. of starts | 32 | 52 | 42 |
| | | % retention | 88 | 94 | 93 |
| | | % pass rate | 100 | 98 | 95 |
| GCE A-level art and design | 3 | No. of starts | 75 | 55 | 78 |
| | | % retention | 87 | 96 | 100 |
| | | % pass rate | 100 | 98 | 99 |
| GCE A-level theatre studies | 3 | No. of starts | 57 | 41 | 41 |
| | | % retention | 81 | 100 | 95 |
| | | % pass rate | 100 | 100 | 100 |

| | | | | | |
|-------------------|---|---------------|-----|-----|-----|
| GCE A-level music | 3 | No. of starts | 28 | 22 | 32 |
| | | % retention | 89 | 91 | 97 |
| | | % pass rate | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

Quality of education and training

93. Teaching is often inspiring, engaging students and encouraging them to take risks and experiment in their independent work. In the best sessions, the pace is brisk and the range of tasks set is imaginative. Students' background knowledge and underpinning skills are very effectively developed in taught sessions, giving them the tools to become very effective and highly motivated independent learners.

94. In many lessons, students' knowledge and understanding are impressively articulated. For example, in one outstanding music lesson, students predicted confidently how Vaughan Williams might choose to set to music the words of several songs. They could discuss this using appropriate technical vocabulary and were well aware of the finer points of Romantic music and composition. In an excellent art lesson, students showed real confidence and imagination in working with a wide range of different media: drawing and painting; printing and collage using junk materials such as tea bags; photography; and work in a range of textiles. One student was thoughtfully using materials from a history trip to Normandy to explore themes of war and religion through collage and photography. Students are set very appropriate extension and homework tasks and come to class well prepared to learn, with the right equipment and materials.

95. Resources are very good in music and theatre studies. The standard of equipment is high in music, and arrangements for rehearsing and performing are good. However, there is a lack of space for large-scale performance work during lesson times. The art department is about to move into excellent new accommodation. Materials used in class are very well prepared and staff and students have access to very good resources to support their work. For example, a very well-developed intranet site enables students to access music files or find out further information for homework. Students and staff benefit from the outstanding contribution made by well-qualified technicians in supporting their work and developing resources.

96. Students' progress is monitored very effectively. Teachers' comments on marked work are informative, and arrangements for assessing and verifying coursework are good. Teachers are very responsive to each individual student's needs, and students know exactly how they are progressing and what they need to do to improve.

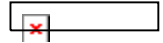
97. Students participate in an excellent range of enrichment activities. A college production of *Les Miserables* involved over 150 students in acting, set-building, costume making or playing in the band. Around the same number of students are involved in choirs, bands and music technology. Several students have been successful in national competitions. In the past two years, students have won the BBC Radio 3/Guardian Young Composer of the Year award for a GCE A-level composition piece. Art students benefit from a range of trips to London, Paris and Holland. Students' learning from all these activities is used very effectively to support their studies in their examination subjects.

98. Guidance and support are very good. Induction activities are well-chosen to introduce students to the style and pace of work at the college, and to teach appropriate skills. All students receive very useful department handbooks that they refer to throughout their course. Teachers and personal tutors give extensive support to each individual student on both academic and personal matters. Such support helps students to become confident and successful in their studies. Students value the time and energy their teachers give to them, and appreciate the mature manner in which they are treated by staff.

Leadership and management

99. Leadership and management are very good. Communications are excellent. Through informal meetings and constant dialogue between teachers, ideas are shared and discussed and detailed planning is undertaken. Teaching staff focus on course planning and teaching, and on meeting the needs of individual students. The self-assessment report is good, presenting an accurate picture of the quality of provision. However, issues of equality and diversity are not explicitly addressed in planning or evaluation.

Humanities



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

Strengths

- very high retention rates, pass rates and attainment
- very high standard of students' written and oral work
- students' enjoyment of their learning
- stimulating and challenging teaching
- outstanding teaching materials which reinforce learning
- excellent support for students
- teaching teams with a passion for learning and student success.

Weaknesses

- cramped accommodation.

Scope of provision

100. The college offers AS-level and GCE A2 courses in geography, government and politics, history, law, religious studies and general studies. Excluding general studies, there are 1,075 enrolments on these courses: 378 students study history, 331 law, 192 geography, 91 government and politics and 83 religious studies. Some 75% of AS-level students move on to study for the full GCE A level in the same humanities subject. All students take AS-level general studies, and most subsequently take GCE A-level general studies, both in their second year.

Achievement and standards

101. Pass and retention rates are excellent, and are above the national averages for all courses except AS-level geography in 2003. Over the last three years as a whole, the vast majority of students who start courses complete them successfully. For example, on GCE A2 religious studies and government and politics, only one student has failed in the last three years. The proportion of students achieving grades A or B is around 20% higher than the national average for sixth form colleges. GCE A-level students achieve better grades than predicted from their GCSE results, particularly for history, law and religious studies. For example, over 100 history students attained one grade on average higher than predicted. A very high percentage of humanities students go on to related courses in HE. Over one-third of history and law students went on to study these subjects to degree level in 2003.

102. The standard of students' written and oral work is impressive. Students are able to analyse complex concepts, and express their own views clearly. For example, in a religious studies class, pairs of students prepared and performed an imaginary dialogue between Freud and Jung on the psychology of religion, which showed they had a firm grasp of the concepts. Students participate confidently in lessons, presenting coherent arguments and demonstrating a thorough knowledge of the subject. In a history lesson on the Versailles peace conference, students developed sound arguments on the fairness of the treaty for Germany, using contemporary German and allied cartoons. In a law lesson on statutory interpretation, students were fluent in a recap of the literal and golden rules, able to associate these with relevant legal cases and to draw comparisons in new work on the 'purposive rule'. Students acquire good study habits. The standard of students' written work is very high. It is enhanced by well-developed study skills and the use of appropriate writing conventions.

A sample of retention and pass rates in humanities, 2001 to 2003

| Qualification | Level | Completion year: | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 |
|-------------------------------|--------------|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| AS-level geography | 3 | No. of starts | 104 | 98 | 103 |
| | | % retention | 96 | 98 | 97 |
| | | % pass rate | 96 | 91 | 87 |
| AS-level history | 3 | No. of starts | 207 | 189 | 200 |
| | | % retention | 95 | 94 | 98 |
| | | % pass rate | 98 | 99 | 94 |
| AS-level law | 3 | No. of starts | 89 | 121 | 221 |
| | | % retention | 98 | 95 | 91 |
| | | % pass rate | 100 | 90 | 94 |
| GCE A-level history | 3 | No. of starts | 113 | 154 | 151 |
| | | % retention | 93 | 100 | 98 |
| | | % pass rate | 92 | 99 | 99 |
| GCE A-level religious studies | 3 | No. of starts | 19 | 17 | 31 |
| | | % retention | 89 | 100 | 97 |
| | | % pass rate | 100 | 100 | 100 |

| | | | | | |
|--|---|---------------|-----|-----|-----|
| GCE A-level government and politics | 3 | No. of starts | 35 | 28 | 44 |
| | | % retention | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| | | % pass rate | 100 | 96 | 100 |

Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

Quality of education and training

103. The quality of teaching and of learning is very good. Lessons are stimulating and a lively pace is maintained throughout. Students enjoy their learning and are highly motivated. Good use is made of techniques to review learning and check understanding. This is often done imaginatively. For example, in a law lesson on homicide, students used hand-held whiteboards to answer multiple-choice questions in the manner of *The Weakest Link*. This was fun and gave the teacher an excellent way of testing students' understanding quickly. There is skilful use of targeted question-and-answer techniques. This is characterised by frequent use of praise and encouragement to develop and extend understanding. Students learn well in groups and paired activity. Students value and respect the opinions of fellow students and there is much peer learning in groups. Teachers work skilfully with groups to support individuals and develop learning.

104. Much thought is given to the design of lessons. Tasks are always set clearly, students know what is expected of them and are given timescales for completion. Learning is well structured, with varied activities to maintain the high levels of students' engagement which characterise lessons. For example, in an AS-level religious studies lesson, the teacher provided a clear framework for the students to use while watching a video clip from *Schindler's List*. This assisted them to identify themes in their work on the moral argument. There is excellent use of ILT to enhance learning. In a dynamic geography lesson on glaciation, there was excellent use of multimedia including annotated photographs, diagrams and material from the department's intranet, in conjunction with a well-prepared study workbook.

105. Teachers have high expectations which students value and respond to positively. There is a strong emphasis on what students need to do in order to achieve the best possible grades in examinations. Students are helped to acquire excellent examination skills: they learn to recognise the vocabulary of questions and to plan time in relation to the marks available. Teachers use their expertise as examiners to make students familiar with marking schemes and model answers. Students are given marking exercises which help them appreciate how examiners work and how to improve their techniques. For example, in a history lesson on appeasement, students first identified assessment criteria and then appraised a specimen answer. A variety of methods are used to improve performance following tests. Law students use model answers on the intranet, filling in spaces to consolidate learning. Teachers encourage students always to turn a good answer into an excellent one. Students are set homework regularly. Feedback from teachers is excellent.

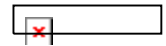
106. The quality of teaching materials used across the humanities curriculum area is outstanding, and is an important factor in student success. Excellent study guides and workbooks prepared by teachers are designed to structure and reinforce learning. The humanities sites on the college intranet are excellent. They contain a wide range of topical materials of high quality. These can be accessed throughout the college and by students at home. AS-level and GCE A2 general studies are taught through a wide range of paper-based and ILT resources. Subject rooms are well resourced, with additional book stock, worksheets and, in most cases, ILT equipment. Much accommodation is too small for current group sizes. This can limit flexibility in teaching styles.

107. Study of humanities subjects is enriched by visits such as a geography field trip to Iceland, visits to the Old Bailey and Parliament for law students, and visiting speakers from universities. Support for students is excellent. There is a well-established system of teachers being available to students outside lessons, a facility which students use fully to access support and extension work.

Leadership and management

108. Leadership and management are very good. Strong leadership by heads of department and an excellent team ethos maintain a key focus on students' achievement. Teachers are passionately committed to their subjects and to the success of their students. They are self-critical and continually seek to improve. Students' views are taken into account in planning. Teachers share good practice and work well collaboratively. Quality assurance is well established at subject level. Self-assessment is well embedded and informs improvement. Data on students' performance is analysed rigorously. There is some monitoring of equal opportunities, but targets are not set for improvement. Some opportunities for promoting race and gender issues exist in the teaching of general studies.

Psychology and sociology



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

Strengths

- excellent pass and retention rates

- very high levels of attainment

- high standard of students' research, analytical and oral skills

- very lively and enthusiastic teaching stimulates learning

- outstanding teaching and learning materials

- very good support for individual students

- strong focus on continuous improvement of teaching and learning.

Weaknesses

- no significant weaknesses.

Scope of provision

109. The college offers AS-level and GCE A2 courses in psychology and sociology. Some 316 students are studying psychology at AS-level level and 201 at GCE A2. There are 128 students taking AS-level sociology and 87 taking GCE A2 sociology. The departments also provide various options in the college-wide enrichment programme including criminology, child development, abnormal psychology and multimedia studies.

Achievement and standards

110. On all courses, pass and retention rates are excellent, being considerably higher than the national averages for sixth form colleges. Few students who start courses fail to complete them successfully. The proportion of students achieving high grades is also better than the national average. For example, three-quarters of students entering GCE A2 psychology and over half of those students entering GCE A2 sociology achieved grades A or B in 2003. Students achieve higher grades than would be expected from their prior GCSE grades, according to the nationally recognised system which the college uses to measure added value. The progress students make from their starting points is particularly impressive on psychology courses. Most students move from AS level to GCE A2. There is very good progression to HE.

111. Students demonstrate very good analytical, evaluative and independent research skills. They work with concentration and focus and produce findings very quickly. They develop a high standard of general academic and subject-specific intellectual skills, and are able to evaluate their own, and their peers', performance. They are confident and articulate when making presentations. For example, sociology students used powerpoint presentations to give articulate talks about research studies on changing ethnic identities. This was part of a carefully structured process which started with research and went on to essay construction and writing after the presentation.

A sample of retention and pass rates in psychology and sociology, 2001 to 2003

| Qualification | Level | Completion year: | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 |
|------------------------|--------------|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| AS-level psychology | 3 | No. of starts | 322 | 285 | 316 |
| | | % retention | 89 | 95 | 92 |
| | | % pass rate | 100 | 97 | 95 |
| AS-level sociology | 3 | No. of starts | 92 | 164 | 127 |
| | | % retention | 90 | 95 | 96 |
| | | % pass rate | 98 | 94 | 97 |
| GCE A-level psychology | 3 | No. of starts | 139 | 211 | 190 |
| | | % retention | 97 | 97 | 98 |
| | | % pass rate | 100 | 100 | 99 |
| GCE A-level sociology | 3 | No. of starts | 58 | 50 | 125 |
| | | % retention | 97 | 96 | 99 |
| | | % pass rate | 100 | 100 | 99 |

Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

Quality of education and training

112. Teaching is lively and enthusiastic. Teachers are skilled practitioners who bring a supportive approach, and often fun, to their lessons. They have a very good understanding of how to promote

effective learning and employ a wide range of simple, but effective, pedagogical techniques. These include quizzes and wordsearches, gapped handouts, timed essays and the use of hand-held whiteboards for quick responses to verbal tests. Students look forward to their lessons. Group work is collaborative and co-operative, and students engage in active and mature debate. For example, psychology students studied answers to examination questions which classmates had written. They then discussed them, using the mark scheme, before grading them using hand-held whiteboards. Over two sessions, they clearly improved their ability to analyse the work as they debated its quality.

113. In many lessons, students work intensively and there is an intellectual 'buzz' as they meet the demands of challenging and interesting work. For example, psychology students enjoyed recording the frequency of aggressive acts from a *Tom and Jerry* cartoon prior to examining some of the methodological difficulties of media research. In a psychology AS-level class, an imaginative revision exercise on Bandura's research involved students playing a game in which success involved identifying accurate definitions of relevant terminology.

114. All teachers employ a wide range of techniques to check learning, using questioning particularly effectively to ensure that students of all abilities have understood. Good relationships help to create an active learning environment in which students and teachers are committed to ensuring success.

115. Teaching staff are well qualified, experienced and enthusiastic about their subjects. They have produced excellent resources to support learning, some of which are placed on the college intranet. These include essay planners, topic packages, self-evaluation activities, prompter packs and coursework guides. Materials are constructed in such a way as to take students systematically through subject-specific skills building. A good supply of appropriate texts is available both in the library and within the departments. Teaching rooms are enhanced by interesting and vibrant wall displays produced by students. Students and staff make effective use of environmental learning cues, such as mobiles of psychology definitions hanging from the ceiling.

116. There is very close and effective monitoring of students' progress by subject teachers and personal tutors. Teaching staff and students are aware of grade predictions and carefully track progress against these. Homework is set frequently and marked and returned quickly. Marking is of a high standard. Written comments are usually detailed and provide clear guidance which can help students to improve. Teachers also provide detailed guidance on an individual basis. Staff use a wide range of methods to assess students' learning in class. Assignments are linked to examination requirements and students carry out activities which encourage them to think like an examiner.

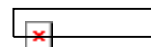
117. Psychology has strong links with practising psychologists. Students attend lectures at the local university and participate in social psychology investigations. Sociology have recently strengthened external links through visits to the local university education department, and invite postgraduate students to visit the college and talk to college students about their research.

118. Students benefit from very good individual support. Teachers give generously of their time in providing help for students outside timetabled hours. Staff work alongside students in a resources room when they are not teaching. All teachers can be contacted by e-mail. During the inspection, several students e-mailed teachers with questions relating to their revision. These were rapidly answered. Staff identify students who need additional help, and coaching is provided swiftly and effectively. Formal subject support is provided through additional revision sessions or sessions aimed at particular aspects, such as coursework.

Leadership and management

119. Leadership and management are very good. Two effective and enthusiastic subject teams are committed to ensuring the success of the students. There is a strong commitment to improving the quality of teaching and learning. The self-assessment process is a team effort. The self-assessment report is accurate and the staff share out the responsibility for undertaking the actions identified. They work collaboratively and supportively to share good practice and resources, often through informal methods. Equality and diversity are actively promoted both through displays and through the taught curriculum.

English



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

Strengths

- high pass and retention rates
- good progress of students in comparison with previous attainment
- strong focus in teaching on developing students' academic potential
- excellent teaching materials to promote learning
- excellent academic guidance and support for individual students
- inspiring curriculum leadership and very good management.

Weaknesses

- no significant weaknesses.

Scope of provision

120. The department offers advanced level courses in English language, English literature, and a combined course in English language and literature. A re-sit course in GCSE English is also offered. There are around 200 students on AS-level and GCE A2 English language courses, 220 on English literature, and 180 on the combined language and literature course. Some 19 students were re-sitting GCSE English language.

Achievement and standards

121. There are very high pass and retention rates on all English courses. On all advanced level courses, both pass and retention rates were above 90% in 2003. Nearly all students who commence English courses complete them successfully, often achieving high grades. The proportion of

students achieving grades A or B at GCE A2 is significantly higher than national averages on all courses. Two-thirds of English literature students achieved grades A or B in 2003. Students make very good progress on their courses and frequently achieve higher grades than would be expected from their GCSE results. Most students on the GCSE course achieve a pass at A* to C.

122. Students' written work is detailed and thorough, and shows a very good understanding of terminology. It is clearly expressed, and thoughts are well developed. For example, students' essays on Coleridge demonstrate progressive analysis of his ideas. Literature students can evaluate imagery intelligently, and relate it both to the theme of the poem and to Coleridge's stylistic treatment as a whole. There is very good use of textual reference. In English language, students can accurately apply linguistic theories to the analysis of source material. In lessons, students' responses are fluent and full, and show an ability to relate new learning to other contexts.

A sample of retention and pass rates in English, 2001 to 2003

| Qualification | Level | Completion year: | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 |
|---|--------------|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| AS-level English language | 3 | No. of starts | 126 | 133 | 127 |
| | | % retention | 92 | 96 | 93 |
| | | % pass rate | 98 | 97 | 99 |
| AS-level English language and literature | 3 | No. of starts | 110 | 93 | 103 |
| | | % retention | 95 | 96 | 92 |
| | | % pass rate | 96 | 94 | 94 |
| AS-level English literature | 3 | No. of starts | 126 | 114 | 142 |
| | | % retention | 93 | 94 | 96 |
| | | % pass rate | 100 | 98 | 92 |
| GCE A-level English language | 3 | No. of starts | 130 | 81 | 77 |
| | | % retention | 86 | 99 | 97 |
| | | % pass rate | 98 | 99 | 99 |
| GCE A-level English language and literature | 3 | No. of starts | 129 | 69 | 46 |
| | | % retention | * | 99 | 96 |
| | | % pass rate | 91 | 99 | 98 |
| GCE A-level English literature | 3 | No. of starts | 98 | 88 | 67 |
| | | % retention | 97 | 99 | 100 |
| | | % pass rate | 97 | 100 | 100 |

Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

* data unreliable

Quality of education and training

123. Teaching and learning are of a very high standard. Class teaching focuses strongly on developing students' academic potential. Lessons are well planned and challenging, inviting students to explore topics through a variety of stimulating activities whilst developing the personal skills for effective study. One AS-level English literature group studying *Wuthering Heights* was drawn by the teacher's skilful questioning and their own group discussion into a detailed understanding of the subtleties of Emily Bronte's characterisation. In a GCE A2 English language lesson, students showed their mastery of linguistic concepts and terminology when responding to the teacher's presentation of a seven year old's fictional writing. Some teaching is inspirational. For example, in one GCE A2 English literature lesson, the teacher brought the revision of poetry to life

for the whole class. He challenged students to see the subtlety of the imagery, and to draw out their appreciation of similar images in other poems by the same writer. Discussion was animated and sustained, and the level of debate was impressively high.

124. Students are provided with an excellent range of teaching materials to support their learning. For example, the detailed study guides written by staff to widen students' understanding and appreciation of literary texts, and promote their independent study of them, are of high quality. They are comprehensive and include socio-historic background, biographical information and critical commentaries. Classrooms are sometimes too small for the size of groups using them. The teaching team is well qualified and experienced; the majority has higher degrees in English. Staff development is effective in improving the quality of teaching and learning through the sharing of good practice.

125. Teachers assess their students' work thoroughly and provide constructive advice on how to improve further. Staff highlight areas of the text or topic that students have not paid sufficient attention to. They recommend extension reading to ensure that the more able students have every opportunity to fulfil their potential. Teachers set homework frequently, and have high expectations of the effort and thought that students should put into completing assignments. For example, students had to tackle a series of demanding assignments on *The Tempest*, analysing plot, theme and character. Students' progress is monitored carefully and regularly.

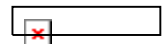
126. Students have many opportunities to develop their interest in literature and writing through enrichment activities. Many students participate in courses in creative writing, journalism, a debating society, and in the production of the college newsletter. Students' background knowledge and skills are effectively enhanced through the non-examined curriculum.

127. Students receive excellent guidance and support from teachers. English staff show an ongoing concern for the welfare of each individual student, in addition to the regular formal progress reviews that are held. Staff are always available to give extra support to students with academic or personal concerns. Teaching staff know their students well and use lessons to build individual confidence, knowledge and understanding. A high proportion of students continue their study of English in HE.

Leadership and management

128. Leadership is outstanding. There is a clear vision which stresses the importance and pleasures of the subject. The English team share a common purpose. They work very closely together to consider ways of improving students' performance and to develop teaching approaches. All students are valued and are encouraged to achieve their potential. Self-assessment processes are rigorous and accurate. Staff make good use of data to measure students' performance and to set targets for retention and pass rates. Course leaders ensure the regular interchange of ideas for the improvement of good practice.

Modern foreign languages



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

Strengths

- students' outstanding achievements in examinations

- very good teaching that motivates students to learn

- very well-developed speaking skills of students
- outstanding contribution of foreign languages assistants to students' learning
- excellent individual support for students
- very good leadership and management.

Weaknesses

- no significant weaknesses.

Scope of provision

129. The college offers courses in French, German and Spanish at AS level and GCE A2. There are currently 332 students enrolled on foreign language courses: there are over 160 students on French courses, around 80 studying German, and over 50 studying Spanish. There is an AS-level Spanish group for students who have not studied the language before. On the enrichment programme, there are language opportunities for all students; for example, a holiday Spanish course, a European literature and philosophy course, and the opportunity to produce a French newspaper appropriately called *Tête Verte*.

Achievement and standards

130. Students' achievements are outstanding. At GCE A2, pass rates are usually 100%. In all three languages, pass rates at AS level have been over 90% in each of the last three years; significantly above national averages. The proportion of students achieving grades A or B at both AS level and GCE A2 is also very large, with over half of all students achieving such grades over the last three years. Analysis of students' achievements compared with their GCSE results on entry shows that their advanced level grades are frequently higher than predicted.

131. Students' work is very good. Written work is well presented and demonstrates the high level of knowledge, understanding and skills acquired. Essays are full of good ideas, are well structured and are expressed in good, idiomatic language. Students show a good knowledge of European culture and of many current social and political issues. The range of subjects chosen for coursework is wide, with the more adventurous students tackling modern philosophy and literature. Students participate actively in lessons, speaking with confidence in the target language, often expressing complex ideas. For example, in one lesson, students had a very full and well-informed discussion in French on the English National Health Service and the current debate over foundation hospitals.

A sample of retention and pass rates in modern foreign languages, 2001 to 2003

| Qualification | Level | Completion year: | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 |
|---------------------|-------|------------------|------|------|------|
| AS-level French | 3 | No. of starts | 104 | 99 | 100 |
| | | % retention | 91 | 99 | 97 |
| | | % pass rate | 99 | 99 | 93 |
| AS-level German | 3 | No. of starts | 48 | 48 | 45 |
| | | % retention | 90 | 96 | 98 |
| | | % pass rate | 98 | 93 | 93 |
| AS-level Spanish | 3 | No. of starts | 30 | 21 | 51 |
| | | % retention | 93 | 90 | 96 |
| | | % pass rate | 96 | 95 | 92 |
| GCE A-level French | 3 | No. of starts | 69 | 64 | 70 |
| | | % retention | 83 | 97 | 100 |
| | | % pass rate | 93 | 100 | 100 |
| GCE A-level German | 3 | No. of starts | 36 | 29 | 31 |
| | | % retention | 83 | 100 | 90 |
| | | % pass rate | 100 | 100 | 93 |
| GCE A-level Spanish | 3 | No. of starts | * | 23 | 16 |
| | | % retention | * | 96 | 100 |
| | | % pass rate | * | 95 | 100 |

Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

* fewer than 15 starters enrolled

Quality of education and training

132. Teaching is very good, and some is outstanding. All lessons are well planned, with clear objectives. Schemes of work have been produced to ensure consistency of approach in the three languages. Lessons are conducted almost exclusively in the target language, with English only being used to check understanding and for the explanation of particularly difficult grammatical structures. Teachers choose carefully the language they use in order to ensure understanding. The focus in the lessons is on motivating students to learn. There is much encouragement, praise and confidence building. Activities are varied and relevant. Group and pair work are used effectively so that students learn how to engage with others and be supportive of one another. The learning of vocabulary and tenses is emphasised through regular homework and testing, and also during lessons held in the multimedia centre. This learning is always contextualised and linked to topics being studied. For example, in one very good Spanish lesson, students practised and mastered the use of the present subjunctive through using computer software to identify and translate this form of the verb using a range of media reports.

133. There are eight foreign languages assistants, who make an outstanding contribution to students' learning. The assistants are given training in how to conduct oral discussions according to examination specifications. Their work is monitored regularly. Each student receives a weekly one-to-one conversation class. These lessons are linked to the topics being studied, reinforce the learning from classes, and prepare students for their oral examinations.

134. Resources in the modern languages area are very good. Staff are very experienced. All have been external examiners at some time, and two are currently examiners. There are six dedicated classrooms, including a well-maintained language laboratory which has a satellite link, and a modern language multimedia room with 21 computers. Textbooks are well chosen and relevant, and

interesting worksheets are provided. The language laboratory is used effectively to develop the listening skills of the students. Classrooms are clean and well decorated, with bright and useful wall displays. However, two of them are too small for the size of groups currently using them. There is a modern languages resource centre, used by both staff and students. Resources in the college's library are good, with well-produced materials for students' coursework, tapes, videos and a wide range of periodicals.

135. The monitoring of students' progress is thorough. An initial diagnostic test is used to ascertain students' understanding of grammar. Before the first half-term, a formal assessment is given to all AS-level students. Using this and an analysis of students' GCSE scores, a target grade is established, agreed with students and communicated to parents. Progress against the target grade is monitored assiduously. Students are made aware of the action they need to take to improve their performance. Students' work is marked promptly and corrected with useful comments. The marking and moderation of coursework are thorough.

136. Links with local schools are good. Some language students act as language assistants in partner schools, holding small conversation groups. Schools send pupils to the college for an afternoon to sample language teaching and to use the college's language laboratory and multimedia centre. The college responds quickly to changes in the schools' foreign languages curriculum.

137. Students are supported very well, both in class and in sessions during lunchtimes and other non-teaching time. Students considered at risk of not achieving the grade predicted by their prior achievement are encouraged to attend sessions at the study centre. A large proportion of language students progress to university, many taking degree courses in languages. Links with Europe are very well developed, with regular exchanges to France, Germany and Spain, including work placements, with half the students participating.

Leadership and management

138. Leadership and management are very good. The head of the department promotes an ethos of encouragement, praise and confidence building. Responsibilities allocated are clear and agreed after discussion with staff. There is constant sharing of good practice and ideas, including those gained at staff development activities. Courses, syllabuses and schemes of work are reviewed thoroughly, and actions agreed by the team are discussed with senior management. Regular formal meetings are organised, targets set and action plans drawn up. Students' progress is monitored effectively and examination results are analysed rigorously. The self-assessment report is accurate. Equal opportunities are promoted effectively throughout the curriculum.

Part D: College data

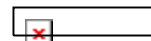
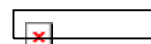


Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age

| Level | 16-18 | 19+ |
|-------|-------|-----|
| 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 3 | 99 | 0 |
| 4/5 | 0 | 0 |



| | | |
|--------------|------------|----------|
| Other | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 100 | 0 |

Source: provided by the college in 2004

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age

| Curriculum area | 16-18 No. | 19+ No. | Total Enrolments (%) * |
|--|----------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Science and mathematics | 1,985 | 0 | 26 |
| Land-based provision | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Construction | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Engineering, technology and manufacture | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Business administration, management and professional | 418 | 0 | 5 |
| Information and communication technology | 211 | 0 | 3 |
| Retailing, customer service and transportation | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel | 197 | 0 | 3 |
| Hairdressing and beauty therapy | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Health, social care and public services | 90 | 0 | 1 |
| Visual and performing arts and media | 332 | 0 | 4 |
| Humanities | 3,481 | 0 | 45 |
| English, languages and communication | 939 | 0 | 12 |
| Foundation programmes | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 7,653 | 0 | 100 |

Source: provided by the college in 2004

* figures have been rounded and may not total 100%

Table 3: Retention and achievement

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|

| Level (Long Courses) | Retention and pass rate | Completion year | | |
|----------------------|------------------------------|-----------------|-------|-------|
| | | 16-18 | | |
| | | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 |
| 1 | Starters excluding transfers | 737 | 217 | 264 |
| | Retention rate (%) | 84 | 96 | 98 |
| | National average (%) | 78 | 80 | 78 |
| | Pass rate (%) | 99 | 98 | 98 |
| | National average (%) | 70 | 66 | 71 |
| 2 | Starters excluding transfers | 685 | 316 | 313 |
| | Retention rate (%) | 88 | 88 | 90 |
| | National average (%) | 80 | 80 | 81 |
| | Pass rate (%) | 94 | 93 | 96 |
| | National average (%) | 80 | 85 | 84 |
| 3 | Starters excluding transfers | 3,086 | 6,607 | 7,150 |
| | Retention rate (%) | 80 | 87 | 95 |
| | National average (%) | 75 | 80 | 89 |
| | Pass rate (%) | 96 | 96 | 96 |
| | National average (%) | 85 | 86 | 88 |

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.

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) | 91 | 9 | 0 | 148 |
| Level 2 (intermediate) | 83 | 17 | 0 | 6 |

| | | | | |
|---------------|-----------|----------|----------|------------|
| Totals | 91 | 9 | 0 | 154 |
|---------------|-----------|----------|----------|------------|

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