



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards
in Education

Inspection report
The Sheffield College

Dates of inspection: 2–13 December 2002

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Basic information about the college

Name of college:	The Sheffield College
Type of college:	General Further Education College
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Chair of governors:	Ken Franklin
Unique reference number:	130531
Name of reporting inspector:	David Eden HMI
Dates of inspection:	2–13 December 2002

Part A: Summary

Information about the college

Sheffield has a population of 530,000. The unemployment rate in June 2002 was 4.5% compared with 5.2% for Yorkshire and Humberside and 5.1% nationally. The figure rises to over 10% in some parts of the city. In 2001/02, the participation rate in full-time education for students aged 16 was 66.4% in Sheffield against 71% nationally. Slightly more students are in part-time education in Sheffield than nationally. More students aged 16 and 17 are on government sponsored training in Yorkshire and Humberside than nationally. In 2002, the proportion of students aged 16 achieving five A* to C grades at General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) was 41.4%, compared with 51.5% in England.

The Sheffield College is the second largest further education (FE) college in England. It was formed by the amalgamation of six separate tertiary colleges in 1992. The college has four main centres: Castle close to the centre of the city; Parson Cross in the north; Loxley in the north west; and Norton in the south. Castle is also the main administrative centre. Each centre offers a mix of core and specialist provision. Construction, engineering, catering, hairdressing and beauty therapy are located at Castle. Art, design and media are located at Norton and Loxley. Business and management training is located at Parson Cross. The college also uses 47 community-based venues in and around the city for its adult and community education provision. The Local Education Authority maintains seven schools with sixth forms in the city. The remaining schools are 11 to 16. There are two independent schools with sixth forms. The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) has recently given permission for a new independent sixth form centre to be established in the north east. There are major colleges offering a mixture of further and higher education (HE) in Barnsley, Chesterfield, Doncaster and Rotherham, all within a 15-mile radius of Sheffield. About a third of the students living in Sheffield who leave school aged 16 and who participate in FE attend colleges outside the city. The college is identified as one of a group that typically recruits a high percentage of students from disadvantaged areas. The college offers programmes in all 14 areas of learning recognised by the LSC for funding purposes. The provision in land based and retailing, customer services and transportation is small. In 2001/02, there were 61,994 enrolments. Some 19,900 were adults who studied part time and some 4,550 were students aged 16 to 18 who studied full time. Some 57% of students are female. Although minority ethnic groups form 7% of the general population, they form 12.6% of the college enrolments. In 2001/02, the college provided work-based learning for 201 learners on foundation modern apprenticeships, 137 on advanced modern apprenticeships and 33 on National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs). The college's recently reviewed mission is 'to meet the agreed needs of the individual learner and build on the foundation of skills necessary for the economic and social development of Sheffield and the surrounding area'.

How effective is the college?

Inspectors judged teaching and students' achievements to be good in seven of the fifteen areas of learning inspected, satisfactory in six, and unsatisfactory in two. The quality of work-based learning was considered to be unsatisfactory in the three areas inspected. The college's main strengths and areas that need to be improved are listed below:

Key strengths

- most pass and retention rates at, or above, national averages
- effective implementation of the recovery plan
- good guidance and support for students
- broad range of courses meeting the needs of a wide range of students and promoting inclusiveness
- good specialist resources.

What should be improved

- the overall quality of teaching and learning
- some unsuitable teaching accommodation
- the implementation of the quality assurance procedures at course level
- students' attendance
- the management of work-based learning.

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
Mathematics	Satisfactory. Most teaching is at least satisfactory, but much is undemanding. Pass rates are high and retention rates are satisfactory on most courses. There is a good range of part-time GCSE and full-time General Certificate of Education Advanced-level (GCE A-level) courses, but insufficient GCE A-level part-time evening courses. GCSE course materials are well designed and informative.
Science	Good. Teaching in the majority of lessons is good. Pass rates are high on GCE A-level and Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) courses, but retention rates are low on GCSE courses. There is a good range of vocational and access to HE courses. Attendance rates are unsatisfactory on courses below level 3.
Construction	Satisfactory. Most teaching is satisfactory, but some theory lessons are poorly taught. Pass and retention rates are high on many courses. The construction provision is poorly co-ordinated and developed. Provision for work-based learners is unsatisfactory.
Engineering	Unsatisfactory. Teaching is good in workshops, but too many lessons are poorly taught. Pass rates are high, but retention rates are low on many courses. There is some poor assessment practice. Curriculum management and provision for work-based learners are unsatisfactory.
Business	Satisfactory. Most teaching is at least satisfactory, but much is unimaginative. Pass and retention rates are high on the majority of courses. The work experiences of part-time students are used well to enliven lessons. Course team meetings are ineffective.

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Information and communication technology	Satisfactory. Most teaching is at least satisfactory, but in too many lessons students are not sufficiently involved. Pass and retention rates are satisfactory on most courses, but high on General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) intermediate IT and low for information technology (IT) key skills. There is a wide range of courses at both the college's main centres and at community-based venues. Access to some specialist software is limited.
Hospitality and catering	Good. Most teaching is good. Students display good practical skills. Pass and retention rates are high on national licensee's certificate and level 3 food preparation and cooking courses, but low on craft bakery and part-time level 2 food preparation and cooking courses. Few modern apprentices meet all the requirements of their apprenticeship framework.
Sports, leisure and tourism	Good. Most teaching is good. Pass and retention rates are high on most sport and leisure courses. There are excellent specialist sports facilities. Students lack opportunities to participate in competitive college-wide sports fixtures.
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	Satisfactory. Most teaching is satisfactory, but a small proportion is good. Pass rates are high on beauty therapy and short courses, but retention rates are low on many full-time courses. Few modern apprentices complete their apprenticeships successfully. Students' progress is carefully monitored. Provision for work-based learners is unsatisfactory.
Health, social care and childcare	Good. Most teaching is good and some is very good. Pass rates are high and retention rates are satisfactory on the majority of courses. Well-structured tutorials help students to make good progress. Students benefit from well-managed work placements.
Visual and performing arts	Good. Most teaching is good. Pass rates are high on most courses, but retention rates are low on performing arts courses. There is good use of performance to develop students' practical skills. Resources for art and design, dance and drama are good, but resources for music are inadequate.

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Psychology, sociology, politics, law	Satisfactory. Most teaching is satisfactory, but it is not sufficiently demanding in some lessons. Pass rates are high on most courses, but retention rates are low on GCE Advanced Subsidiary (GCE AS) and access to HE courses. Students on pre-access and access to HE courses get good guidance and support. Subject-specific support for students aged 16 to 18 is inadequate.
Modern foreign languages	Good. The majority of teaching is good. Pass rates are high on most courses, but retention rates are low on Open College Network (OCN) courses at levels 1 and 2. Students produce work of a high standard. There is an extensive range of languages in the college and at community-based venues.
English	Good. Much teaching is very good or outstanding. Pass rates are high on most courses, but retention rates are low on courses for adults and on GCE AS communication studies and GCSE English literature. The wide range of courses meets the needs of individual students well. Effective assessment practice helps students make good progress.
Literacy and numeracy	Unsatisfactory. A significant minority of teaching is unsatisfactory. Some adults make good progress in developing their literacy and numeracy skills. Too many literacy and numeracy lessons take place in poor accommodation or in rooms without appropriate resources. The management of literacy and numeracy is unsatisfactory.

How well is the college led and managed?

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The college has taken action to address many of the weaknesses identified in the last inspection report. There is less teaching that is good or better than that seen nationally. Teaching of adults is better than that for students aged 16 to 18. Pass rates are at, or above, the national averages for all age-groups and levels of learning. Retention rates are at, or above, the national averages for both age-groups at all levels except for adult students on level 1 courses. Governors and managers are effectively implementing the recommendations of the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) review of the college in July 2000 and the resultant recovery plan. Management of the curriculum is satisfactory in most curriculum areas. Communications are good with external partners and satisfactory within the college. Financial management is good. The college provides satisfactory value for money. Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the college's self-assessment report.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?

The college's response to education and social inclusion is good. Equal opportunities and race relation's policies are carefully implemented and monitored. Good education and training opportunities are provided for students with a wide range of experiences and educational backgrounds. Significant numbers of students are recruited from socially and economically deprived areas. Outstanding approaches to widening participation for under-represented groups have been developed. The needs of all students are met effectively. Many students make significant gains in confidence and self-esteem. Students value the welcoming and supportive environment. The learning support team provides good and sensitive support for students with additional learning needs. The college makes sound provision for students with learning difficulties, the majority of whom are on mainstream courses. There is rigorous analysis of student data relating to gender, ethnicity, age and learning difficulty and/or disability. Access for people with restricted mobility is good at most centres.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?

Support for students is good. A comprehensive range of support services is provided. The college's system for tracking students' progress is effective. Strong pastoral support and a good tutorial framework provide good guidance and support for students. Specialist staff support students with physical and other disabilities well. Good pre-entry and induction processes help students integrate easily into the college community. There are effective links with external agencies and schools. Outcomes from initial assessment are not always used effectively to plan teaching and learning strategies. There is inadequate co-ordination and analysis of data on students' destinations in course planning. Attendance is poor on some courses. Some services are new and not yet fully established or evaluated. These include counselling and the roles of transition adviser and achievement and retention officers.

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

- approachable friendly and helpful staff
- welcoming learning environment
- adult atmosphere based on mutual respect
- very good support from tutors
- good standards of teaching
- good resources and facilities in curriculum areas
- cultural mix of students that is valued and celebrated
- provision of transport in some centres.

What they feel could be improved

- lack of competitive sports
- excessive length of some lessons
- high costs and limited choices of food in the canteen
- insufficient guidance for key skills
- lack of room in some accommodation
- lack of student common rooms
- limited opportunities for external visits.

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 LSC. The college's action plan must show what action the college will take to bring about improvements in response to issues raised in the report. The governors should agree it before it is submitted to the local LSC. The local LSC is responsible for ensuring that the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) receives the college's post-inspection action plan within the stipulated two months.

Part B: The college as a whole

Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

Aspect & learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16–18	57	35	8
19+ and WBL*	61	30	9
Learning 16–18	52	38	10
19+ and WBL*	65	28	7

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

**work-based learning*

Achievement and standards

1. Data on students' achievements drawn from the individualised student records (ISR) for 2000 and 2001 were provided by the LSC. Data provided by the college were used for 2002. Inspectors also used additional data held by the college to help them form their judgements, particularly in relation to work-based learning. The separate reports on areas of learning in Part C give more details about achievement and standards on particular courses.

2. The college offers a wide range of courses, which may be followed through full-time or part-time study, at various levels in all 14 areas of learning as defined by the LSC. Extensive provision is offered at community-based venues. The inspection sampled provision in 15 curriculum areas. Work-based training is currently provided in six areas with the largest numbers of trainees in construction, engineering and hairdressing and beauty therapy. Retention and pass rates have been compared with those of other colleges that typically recruit a high percentage of students from disadvantaged areas. In 2001/02, pass rates were above the national average for the sector at every level for both age-groups and retention rates were above the national average for the sector for both age-groups at all levels except at level 1. Few modern apprentices achieve the full qualification within the expected time.

3. The overall level of attendance in lessons observed by inspectors was 72%, which is below the sector average as reported in the FEFC Chief Inspector's Annual Report 1999/2000. Poor rates of attendance were noted on some courses in many curriculum areas. Attendance problems are being identified through course reviews and retention and achievement officers have been appointed recently to follow up absences.

16 to 18 year olds

4. In 2001/02, approximately 24% of students were aged 16 to 18. The majority of enrolments were on level 2 courses. Nearly 70% of students were on full-time courses. Overall, retention rates are close to national averages. Retention rates on courses at levels 2 and 3 are just above national averages, while retention rates on level 1 courses are just below the national average. Retention rates have remained generally stable with the exception of a large increase at level 3, from 79% in 2000/01, to 85% in 2001/02. Overall, pass rates are well above national averages at all levels. For example, the pass rates at levels 2 and 3 are at least 7% above national averages. Pass rates have improved at levels 2 and 3 in 2001/02, but have decreased at level 1 in 2001/02.

5. The college has 371 work-based learners. Of these, 137 are advanced modern apprentices, 201 are foundation modern apprentices and 33 are on NVQ training. The college is the main provider of engineering training in the city. Other areas of training are construction, business administration, hospitality and catering, hairdressing and beauty therapy and health, social care and childcare. The achievement of modern apprenticeship frameworks is poor across all the curriculum areas inspected. In many cases, this is because of the poor levels of achievement of key skills. There are also cases, for example, in hairdressing and beauty, where the achievement of the NVQ qualification has also been poor.

Adult learners

6. In 2001/02, approximately 76% of students were adults. The majority of enrolments were on level 1 courses. Almost 95% of students were on part-time courses. Large numbers of adults enrol on short courses. For example, in 2001/02, there were 9,139 enrolments by adults on short courses.

7. Retention rates at levels 2 and 3 have been generally close to national averages. At level 3, they dropped from 79% in 1999/2000 to 73% in 2000/01, which was below the national average. At level 1, the retention rates have remained stable, but have been below the national average. In 2000/01, the retention rate, at 69%, was over 10% below the national average. Pass rates are above national averages at all levels. They are over 10% better than the national average at level 2. They have improved steadily at level 3 from 69% in 1999/2000 to 79% in 2001/02. Pass rates on short courses have varied from year to year with no clear trend of improvement.

8. The retention and pass rates of adults on GCE A-level courses and NVQ courses at levels 1 to 3 have generally been below those of students aged 16 to 18. For example, in 2000/01, the retention rates for adults and students aged 16 to 18 on GCE A levels were 64% and 73%, respectively, and the pass rates were 67% and 84%, respectively. On other courses that are over 24 weeks in length, the pass rates of adults are generally better than students aged 16 to 18, while the retention rates are broadly similar. For example, in 2000/01 on level 2 courses, the pass rates for adults and students aged 16 to 18 were 75% and 68%, respectively, and the retention rates were 78% and 80%, respectively.

Quality of education and training

9. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 344 sessions. Teaching was good or better in 59% of these, satisfactory in 33% and less than satisfactory in 8%. It was excellent or very good in only 21%. The proportion of teaching that was good or better is lower than the average for the sector for colleges of the same type. The highest proportion of good or very good teaching was on hospitality and catering, health, social care and childcare and English courses. The quality of teaching varies considerably across the curriculum areas. In four areas, teaching was less than satisfactory in over 10% of lessons observed. Learning was good or better in 56% of lessons, satisfactory in 35% and unsatisfactory in 9%. The highest proportion of good or very good learning was on hospitality and catering, health, social care and childcare, visual and performing arts and English courses. The weakest teaching was on engineering and literacy and numeracy courses.

10. Adults are better taught than students aged 16 to 18 and they learn more effectively. The teaching in 61% of lessons for adults was good or better, compared with 57% in lessons for students aged 16 to 18. Compared with students aged 16 to 18, adult students were better taught on mathematics, science, ICT, hospitality and catering and literacy and numeracy courses. In most curriculum areas, however, classes contained a mix of students aged 16 to 18 and adults. The best teaching and learning were on level 3 courses and the highest proportions of unsatisfactory teaching and ineffective learning were on entry and level 1 courses.

11. Many lessons were well planned and effective, particularly those in science, hospitality and catering, visual and performing arts, modern foreign languages and English. The teacher explained at the start the aims and objectives of the lesson and at the end checked that these had been met. In several curriculum areas, including construction, hospitality and catering, sports and leisure and English, the teacher took account of the skills and abilities of individual students and used activities, which interested them and allowed them to work at their own pace to match their different levels of ability and experience. Practical lessons were often well designed and interesting and the quality of teaching and learning was generally high. Well-designed briefs in the visual arts helped students to produce good work. In most curriculum areas, students' work was regularly checked and the teacher took care to explain how it could be further improved. Teachers in science, hairdressing and beauty therapy and health, social care and childcare clearly related work done in practical lessons to theory. The quality of learning materials was good in several curriculum areas, including modern foreign languages where authentic artefacts were used effectively by native speakers.

12. In most curriculum areas, teachers did not make enough use of ICT and other learning resources. For example, in engineering some students spent too much time copying notes from the whiteboard; in ICT and numeracy, teachers relied on students to work through workbooks without discussing what they were doing. In nearly half the curriculum areas, some teachers talked too much and did not encourage students to participate in discussion or check that all students were learning. For example, in sociology, politics and law,

hairdressing and beauty therapy and mathematics, teachers failed to ensure that the more able students were set demanding enough work or that less able students were fully involved in the work. In some curriculum areas, such as business, lesson plans did not include intended learning outcomes or methods of teaching, but contained just a list of topics to be covered. In poorly planned theory lessons, teachers did not regularly ensure that students understood key concepts or link the topics to practical applications. There were few links between on-the-job and off-the-job training in work-based learning.

13. There is a wide variation in the quality of the teaching of key skills. In hospitality and catering, key skills were successfully integrated with the students' main course of study. Teachers in engineering and construction attempted to integrate key skills with vocational assignments, but some tasks were unrealistic. Students then became bored or confused. There was little attempt to link key skills to occupational skills in several curriculum areas, including business and health, social care and childcare. In curriculum areas where key skills were taught in separate lessons, few learning materials related to the students' vocational course of study, and students made little progress. The teaching of key skills was poor in work-based learning, where the majority of trainees failed to complete their apprenticeship framework because they did not achieve the necessary key skills.

14. The college employs 30 senior staff, 683 full-time equivalent teachers and 734 full-time equivalent support staff. Staff are suitably qualified. Over 90% of full-time teachers have qualified teacher status. Some teachers have had insufficient recent industrial updating, for example, in travel and tourism, engineering and business.

15. The accommodation strategy identifies the need to reduce surplus accommodation by about 20%. The new building for construction studies at Castle will allow the closure of the Talbot centre. Plans to replace Parson Cross and Loxley with a new centre are well advanced. This will reduce the surplus accommodation. The college provides a clean and safe environment. Many of the deficiencies noted in the previous inspection report have been remedied. Refectory services are now available on all the main centres and open early to serve breakfasts. Accessibility has been improved so that nearly all centres are fully accessible to students with restricted mobility. More social areas have been created for learners. However, Castle still lacks a significant social area.

16. The accommodation and equipment for specialist work are generally good. Most construction workshops are spacious and well equipped. Business courses are well resourced. The sports and leisure facilities at Norton are excellent. The theatre, drama and dance studios at Norton and the general art and design workshop suite at Loxley are of a high standard. There is a high level of equipment for IT courses. Catering has a good range of specialist accommodation at Castle. Science laboratories are well equipped. Engineering has an appropriate range of workshops and laboratories. Hair and beauty salons are fit for purpose, but are beginning to look dated. Music resources are unsatisfactory especially the equipment and accommodation for popular music. Some teaching accommodation is unsatisfactory. Some engineering, construction and health and social care classrooms are too small for the current numbers of students. Some language classrooms are dull and minimally

equipped. Much of the basic skills teaching accommodation is poor and lacks suitable teaching resources. Some rooms for mathematics are poor. The quality of accommodation and teaching resources in community-based venues varies from the very good to unsatisfactory.

17. The computing infrastructure is good. Staff and students can access college documents, including management information and learning materials from any location. The computer network provides high levels of reliability. Staff and students have access to a common set of business standard software applications. Web site links for teaching materials continue to be developed. Students cannot always log on to the system quickly. Some of the open access computers in learning centres are timetabled for teaching purposes, thus reducing their availability. There is not always sufficient access to IT for teaching purposes, including access to the Internet. Learning centres provide good learning environments. However, their opening hours in the evenings are restricted and only the Square Mile centres are open at weekends. Learning assistants have been appointed to learning centres. They help students to develop their computing skills, support students in using the computing equipment and develop students' study skills. The library catalogue is available electronically, but is not on the college intranet and students cannot reserve books electronically.

18. The well-established, college-devised system of student recording, reviewing and action planning is used for all full-time and substantive part-time students. It involves the student, personal tutor, subject teachers and, where appropriate, support staff, parents and employers. Matters of concern identified by subject teachers are reported promptly in writing to personal tutors. Individual reviews take place at regular intervals. Reports are sent to parents. Trainees on work-based programmes are monitored in the workplace and at college. Analysis of data on students' achievement as compared with their previous attainment is used to inform and motivate students and to assist with course planning. For full-time students aged 16 to 18, initial assessment data, predictive indices and records of student work are used to monitor performance.

19. The clear assessment policy framework includes both general education and vocational courses. Induction, tutorials and course handbooks ensure that students understand the demands of assessment. All full-time and substantive part-time students are screened as part of initial assessment. Additional support is offered, if needed. Dyslexic students are identified and receive in-class support when necessary. In ICT, the good use of initial assessment to identify appropriate courses has contributed to improved retention and pass rates. The assessment policy offers generic guidance on good assessment practice including the value of developing appropriate assessment strategies and guidance on the use of sampling plans for NVQ courses. The monitoring of student progress is good on work-based programmes and external verification reports state that assessment is fair, at the correct level and follows awarding body requirements. Internal verification practice is generally satisfactory. However, assignment briefs are not always verified. Adults on the 'Freshstart' course in social sciences, some of whom progress to the access to HE course, are closely monitored and assessment is used well to ensure that they are prepared for examinations.

20. Many teachers make constructive comments on students' work, but across the areas of learning the quality of the written feedback is not of the same standard. In some instances, feedback is not sufficiently detailed to make clear to the student how performance can be improved. On general education courses, coursework is marked accurately but errors in spelling and punctuation are not always corrected.

21. The range and levels of courses are comprehensive. They are effectively marketed through well-designed publicity materials. Over 2,800 courses are provided from entry to degree level. At GCE AS and A level, 39 subjects are offered. Specialist vocational courses include those for dental technicians, legal and medical secretaries and a wide range of construction crafts. Eleven different modern foreign languages are taught including Chinese, Urdu and Arabic. More than 1,000 students are enrolled on level 1 language courses. Over 600 students attend 11 separate access to HE courses, including one specifically designed for minority ethnic groups. Some 560 students aged 16 to 18 are enrolled on the Connections entry level programme, which combines a core of basic skills with vocational options. Some 700 adults study on HE courses. Work-based learning provision has grown over the last few years. There are some gaps in provision. For example GCE A-level mathematics is not available on a part-time basis and in construction, in spite of a buoyant labour market, enrolments are falling. The location of some centres creates barriers to participation. For example, Loxley and Parson Cross are not easily accessible by public transport.

22. The range of student enrichment activities is narrow and participation is low. There are very few competitive team sports and relatively small numbers of students take part in sporting activities. Other options include drama, producing the student newspaper and helping disabled students across the city, but in total only about 200 students take part in these activities. Opportunities for worship are provided in prayer rooms at the main college centres. A college chaplain is available by appointment.

23. The college is responsive to many of the different constituencies it serves. Task groups, with membership drawn from various representative bodies, identify the provision required. The principal is a director of 'Sheffield First' which has an overarching role for regenerating the city. A range of link programmes have been developed with local schools through the city learning partnership. They include a 'work start' initiative where pupils at risk of dropping out of education undertake vocational 'taster' courses at the college. Twelve college consultants are working with schools and employers to develop vocational courses for pupils aged 14 to 19. Courses to meet the needs of communities are taught in local venues. Contacts with community organisations are strong. Links with HE are well established. Arrangements with the two local universities help students to progress to the different degree courses available. There are good links with employers in some areas, for example, childcare, hairdressing, and catering. The number of advisory groups is small and there are few opportunities for employers to contribute to curriculum development. The number of employees enrolled at the college to obtain NVQ accreditation of work-based skills is small.

24. The college has achieved national recognition for its education guidance services. Its web site incorporates course information and has direct links to Connexions and student

services departments. Full-time students on health and social care and humanities courses commented favourably on the advice and guidance they received from initial enquiry through to course commencement. However, some part-time students have difficulties finding out information on fee remissions or specific information about their courses. Good induction processes enable students to integrate easily into the college community. Few students change course after their initial induction period. Course and student handbooks provide comprehensive information. The college application form includes a request to disclose any criminal conviction so that a risk assessment can be conducted to protect students and staff, and to identify any additional support needed for the applicant.

25. All full-time and substantive part-time students have an initial assessment of their literacy and numeracy skills on entry to the college. Those identified as needing help benefit from having support tutors working with them at certain times, such as in vocational areas or the workplace. However, the outcomes of initial assessment are not always effectively taken into account by all teachers and the needs of students with poor basic skills are not always met effectively.

26. Learning support services are comprehensive and effectively co-ordinated. Well-qualified and experienced staff provide good specialist support, particularly for students with visual impairments, hearing impairments and autistic spectrum disorders. There is good communication between tutors, teachers, support staff and employers. The learning support teams are not always able to follow up all referrals within a satisfactory timescale.

27. Good personal, financial and social support is available for all students. Students value the additional advice and assistance they receive outside their formal lessons. Guidance and support services are sensitive to issues of equality of opportunity. Nursery provision is oversubscribed. In some instances, it is supplemented by payment of child minders' fees to support a wider range of students. Tutorials are delivered through a well-structured framework. The quality of all the tutorials observed was at least satisfactory. Student satisfaction surveys show that most students value the support they receive from staff. However, some part-time students do not always receive the support required.

28. Transition advisors work closely with staff from the local Connexions service to provide careers advice. Some teachers act as vocational consultants with local schools to share and disseminate expertise and good practice. Whilst destination data are kept in many curriculum areas, there is a lack of co-ordination and analysis of the data to inform course planning. There are effective links with a wide range of external agencies. Staff work closely with youth offending teams, child protection officers, social services and community health teams.

Leadership and management

29. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Governors and managers are effectively addressing the weaknesses identified during the last inspection by the FEFC in May 2000 and implementing the four-year recovery plan. An important element of the recovery plan is the move to a federal college structure in January 2003. The accommodation

strategy is closely related to the plan. The plan focuses clearly on improving student recruitment, retention and pass rates, the efficiency and effectiveness of the college and its financial position. The financial and operational targets within the plan have been met and exceeded. Some 170 staff have taken voluntary redundancy over the last two years. Good progress has been made in improving the college's response to meeting the education and training needs of the local community, the strategic planning process and the reliability and use of management information. Pass rates have improved consistently and are above national averages. Retention rates are at or around national averages for the sector, but the college has not improved the poor retention rates of adults on level 1 courses or the overall quality of its teaching.

30. Governors bring a wide range of skills to the college. They are appropriately involved in reviewing the college mission and updating the strategic plan. They make good use of their detailed knowledge of the college, a comprehensive market need analysis and the views of staff and community partners. Governors regularly monitor the progress the college is making towards its strategic objectives and targets. They set targets for their own performance and review their achievements annually. Operational plans in curriculum and service areas set out how strategic and departmental objectives will be achieved.

31. Financial management of the college is good. Governors and managers closely monitor the financial position of the college. Financial control procedures are clear and well understood. Since 2000/01, the college has operated within its budget allocation, met financial targets and has achieved an operating surplus each year. Division managers carefully monitor expenditure against budget profiles for curriculum areas.

32. The target setting process is satisfactory. Clear targets are set to measure and monitor recruitment, attendance and retention and pass rates at course, department and whole college levels. Many course teams play an active role in setting targets, but in some curriculum areas, targets are agreed with managers and there is little involvement at course team level. Staff regularly review progress made towards achieving targets during college 'planning' days held five times a year and through weekly meetings between division managers. Directors monitor the progress made towards achieving curriculum area targets.

33. Management information is generally reliable. A wide range of statistical reports are used by governors, managers and course teams to assess the quality of provision and to monitor performance against targets. Course teams receive useful, regular statistical information to aid course review. They have access to up-to-date on-line management information. Some teachers make insufficient use of the data to evaluate their work.

34. Curriculum management is satisfactory overall. In the well-managed areas, course teams meet regularly to evaluate their work and the progress students are making. Teachers regularly seek and respond to the views of students. In a minority of curriculum areas, course management lacks rigour, team meetings are infrequent and issues relating to teaching and learning and managing the curriculum are not resolved. Some curriculum areas do not share good practice. The management of work-based learning is poor. Inspectors awarded unsatisfactory contributory grades for work-based learning in the three occupational areas

inspected. Weaknesses include poor co-ordination of theoretical and practical training and the unawareness of some employers of their responsibilities for training in the workplace. Some trainees are not set clear targets to develop their work skills. The number of modern apprentices who achieve their framework is low.

35. There is insufficient focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning. Few observations of teaching have been carried out. The recently reintroduced lesson observation scheme has yet to make a significant impact on the quality of teaching. In many areas, schemes of work and lesson plans do not provide students with an appropriate range of teaching, learning and assessment activities. Inspectors observed a lower proportion of good or better teaching than is the average for similar colleges.

36. Communications within the college are satisfactory. Staff are kept well informed of college-related issues through regular timetabled meetings and a college web site. Staff and students have access to e-mail and the college intranet from all college centres and from home. A college newsletter is published regularly. Frequent 'bulletins' are published for the college and individual centres. Staff report that senior managers are approachable and prepared to consider their views. Some staff report that they do not attend meetings regularly because of the time spent travelling between centres.

37. The college promotes equal opportunities well. It has an equal opportunities policy, a draft race relations policy and suitable action plans to implement the policies. Data reports provide statistical information on the age, gender and ethnic backgrounds of students. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds in the college is 12.6%, compared to 7% in the local community. Recent staff training focused on meeting the different needs of students. Examination results are analysed by ethnic group to identify differing patterns of achievement. As a result of this, the college is working with the Black Community Forum in order to address the particular needs of Somalian, Yemeni, and Pakistani students who are underperforming. An equality project has led to the use of a checklist that is now part of the quality review process.

38. Arrangements for staff development and staff appraisal are satisfactory. Staff are reviewed against their job roles and are set targets to improve their performance. However, while in some curriculum areas all staff are appraised, in others, appraisals are not carried out systematically. New teachers are appraised and take part in a comprehensive induction programme. Training priorities are linked to the college's strategic objectives. Whole college training plans and specific development days are closely linked to college priorities. Individual training needs are identified through appraisal or self-referral. Some staff have not recently taken part in training. Teachers in vocational areas do not systematically update their industrial experience.

39. There are comprehensive and systematic arrangements for assuring the quality of provision. A calendar identifies course and division review activities, and the self-assessment and planning cycles. All are closely linked. In some areas, the implementation of the quality review procedures lack rigour. Some course reviews and some self-assessment activities are not carried out thoroughly, and action plans are not carefully monitored.

40. The college provides satisfactory value for money. The average class size observed during the inspection was slightly above average. Teachers actual teaching hours represent 95% of their contracted hours. These are monitored closely on a weekly basis. The quality of most of the curriculum areas is good, with seven areas of learning graded 2. Another six areas of learning were judged to be satisfactory, but two areas of learning were found to be unsatisfactory. Overall retention rates are satisfactory and pass rates are good and have improved during the last three years.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- high pass rates on most courses
- a good range of part-time GCSE and full-time GCE A-level courses
- well-designed and informative GCSE course materials used by teachers and students
- effective preparation of students for their examinations.

Weaknesses

- much undemanding teaching
- lack of use of ICT in teaching
- insufficient GCE AS and A-level part-time evening courses.

Scope of provision

41. The college provides a wide range of intermediate and advanced level courses in mathematics. At the time of the inspection, there were nearly 1,700 students, of whom about 70% were aged 16 to 18. Over 200 students were studying GCE AS mathematics and 90 students GCE A-level mathematics. About 1,000 students were studying GCSE mathematics and nearly 3,100 were on courses leading to OCN awards.

Achievement and standards

42. Pass rates are significantly above national averages on most courses. Over the last three years they have continued to improve. Adult students do particularly well in GCSE examinations and in 2002 their pass rate was 15% above the national average. Pass rates for GCE AS mathematics have been over 75% for the last two years. A good proportion of students get high grades in GCE AS and A-level mathematics. The final grades of most students are similar to those predicted on the basis of their GCSE results. Retention rates on most courses are satisfactory.

43. The standard of students' work in lessons and in coursework is generally satisfactory. Most adult students are keen to take part in discussions during lessons and many confidently ask probing questions to increase their understanding. The more successful students present their work carefully and follow good practice in mathematical methods.

Most students' progress is at least satisfactory. Although students often have difficulty in explaining mathematical concepts orally, most are able to complete written exercises well. However, students aged 16 to 18 are often reluctant to offer more than brief answers when questioned. The attendance rate at lessons inspected was low, at 72%.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
OCN mathematics	2	No. of starts	67	71	132
		% retention	70	75	74
		% pass rate	68	55	66
GCSE mathematics short course	2	No. of starts	56	28	59
		% retention	82	96	76
		% pass rate	46	48	49
GCSE mathematics 1 year	2	No. of starts	842	814	903
		% retention	70	71	72
		% pass rate	50	51	54
GCE A-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	181	140	96
		% retention	75	57	96*
		% pass rate	85	89	96

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

*retention rates for GCE A level 2002 are in-year

Quality of education and training

44. Most teaching is satisfactory, but a small proportion is good or better. In the best lessons, teachers set interesting tasks and ensure that students take part. A well-planned lesson for adults, involved students working in pairs to count the number of hidden and seen faces of touching cubes. From their answers they were able to derive a general algebraic formula which applied to any number of cubes. Teachers at all of the college's centres make good use of the high quality, in-house designed GCSE teaching materials for both individual and group work. In a GCSE lesson on shapes, angles and symmetry, students used 2 and 3 dimensional shapes to construct triangles using rules, compasses and protractors. Students

are prepared effectively for examinations by appropriately designed exercises, regular revision work and tests.

45. In a minority of lessons, teachers give students little opportunity to demonstrate or increase their understanding, skills and achievement and do not spend sufficient time checking that all their students are learning. As a result, the more able students are not challenged and become bored while the less able fail to improve their numerical skills. All teachers work to common schemes of work, but these rarely include how the lesson is to be taught. Although there is a wide range of mathematics materials on the college's intranet, teachers do not make enough use of ICT in their teaching, nor do they encourage its use by students.

46. Teachers are appropriately qualified. Data projectors and laptops are available for teachers and students to use in classrooms. However, not all classrooms have access to the network. Few classrooms have wall displays. Some accommodation is poorly maintained.

47. Homework is set regularly, carefully marked and returned promptly. Teachers provide helpful comments and often give students model answers. Students' progress is carefully monitored, but little use is made of target setting and action planning to improve their performance. The procedures for the internal moderation of coursework are not applied consistently. There is inconsistency in grading between centres and some teachers are over generous when marking their students' work.

48. Students have good opportunities to progress from lower level mathematics courses. GCE AS and A-level courses are offered during the day at all of the college's centres. Students can study pure, statistics and mechanics modules. GCSE courses are offered either in the daytime or the evening, at all five major centres as well as in community-based centres. Students can also study mathematics units, including statistics, validated by the OCN at levels 2 and 3. However, there is only one GCE AS evening class and no evening classes GCE A-level.

49. Induction arrangements for advanced level students are effective. Students value the good advice on careers and HE that they are given. Teachers provide good informal support for their students. Arrangements for identifying additional support needs are effective, but teachers are not kept informed of whether students attend support sessions. There are few opportunities for students to receive individual guidance on subject-specific matters outside of the classroom. The tutorial programme is only for full-time students. Part-time students receive little guidance or support.

Leadership and management

50. Management of the curriculum area is satisfactory. Communications between staff is good. Part-time teachers are carefully briefed on what is expected of them. Teachers meet regularly. They set targets for attendance, retention and pass rates. Pass and retention rates are carefully analysed. Action plans are monitored rigorously. Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision identified in the self-assessment report.

They considered, however, that the report had not concentrated enough on the quality of teaching and learning. Destination data are not recorded. Data on students' previous attainment are not used enough in the monitoring of students' performance.

Science

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

Strengths

- high pass rates on GCE A-level and AVCE courses
- good rates of progression by students to HE
- effective use of practical and experimental work
- well-designed learning materials
- a good range of vocational and access to HE courses.

Weaknesses

- insufficient attention to learning outcomes in teaching
- low retention rates on courses for GCSE sciences in 2002
- unsatisfactory attendance rates on courses below level 3
- ineffective management of GCSE courses.

Scope of provision

51. The college offers a wide range of GCSE, GCE AS and A-level subjects. A science option is available at level 1. Vocational courses include GNVQ intermediate and AVCE science and courses in dental technology and pharmacy. Access provision has science and health science options. At the time of the inspection, over 300 students were studying GCE AS and A-level biology, 220 chemistry and 150 physics. Most GCSE subjects had about 70 students. Around 250 adults were enrolled on access programmes.

Achievement and standards

52. Pass rates for most courses are consistently high. GCE A-level chemistry has had pass rates of over 90% for the last four years. In 2002, the AVCE science double award and, in 2001, the advanced GNVQ course both had 100% pass rates. The proportion of high grades on GNVQ intermediate and advanced and GCSE sciences are well above national averages. Overall, retention rates are satisfactory. Retention rates on GNVQ intermediate have been significantly above national averages for the last three years. However, GCSE sciences had low retention rates in 2002. Almost all students who achieve GCE AS sciences take them at A level. In 2001, over 94% of students progressed to GCE A-level courses in biology and chemistry, respectively.

53. Most students' coursework is well presented. Project work produced in GCE A-level physics and GCSE physics and human biology is of a high standard. Students on the AVCE included in their assignments on medical physics detailed research about X-rays, ultrasound and magnetic resonance imaging. Progression rates to HE are good from both general education and vocational courses. A student who achieved the AVCE (double award) and a GCE A level obtained a place at a medical school in 2002. Adult students with little previous or recent laboratory experience develop competence and confidence in the use of laboratory equipment. As well as developing knowledge and understanding of the subject, many students on the access courses also gain self-confidence and self-esteem. Students' attendance in lessons on courses below level 3 is poor.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GCSE sciences	2	No. of starts	217	220	222
		% retention	64	71	66
		% pass rate	45	50	50
GNVQ intermediate science	2	No. of starts	19	20	15
		% retention	89	90	87
		% pass rate	71	78	69
GCE A-level chemistry	3	No. of starts	147	117	59
		% retention	78	64	90*
		% pass rate	93	91	92
GCE A-level biology	3	No. of starts	212	171	95
		% retention	71	64	92*
		% pass rate	86	85	82
GCE A-level human biology 1 year	3	No. of starts	29	24	22
		% retention	66	88	81*
		% pass rate	53	57	47

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GNVQ advanced/AVCE science	3	No. of starts	19	16	13
		% retention	68	69	85
		% pass rate	92	100	100
Access to science access 1 year	3	No. of starts	39	26	17
		% retention	82	85	88
		% pass rate	81	90	93

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

*retention rates for GCE A level 2002 are in-year

Quality of education and training

54. Teaching in the majority of lessons is good. Most teachers make good use of well-planned experimental and practical work to help students learn. In a GCSE lesson, the students designed their own experiments to test the activity of catalase in potatoes. They developed a good understanding of experimental design and were able to identify the limitations in both their designs and in the equipment. Effective theory lessons are well planned. In a lesson on photosynthesis, the teacher enlivened the presentation by using body language to explain concepts such as the excitation of electrons. Students' understanding of key concepts was constantly consolidated through repetition and regular questioning directed at named students. The students gained confidence as the lesson progressed and they were able to answer difficult questions well. Teachers use good learning materials that are appropriate for the level of the course. A handout for foundation level students on separation techniques used clear diagrams and simple language with key terms underlined.

55. In a few lessons, students do not have enough opportunities to apply what they are learning and are not encouraged to participate in the learning tasks. Instead, students sit passively and merely take notes. Some teachers do not check regularly whether all students understand the topic. Teachers do not make sufficient use of ICT in their teaching, nor do they encourage its use by students.

56. Teachers are suitably experienced and qualified. All sites have a range of specialist science laboratories. Most are well equipped and furnished, but two laboratories at Loxley cannot be reached by those with restricted physical mobility. Textbooks and other good reference materials are readily available for students to use. The provision of ICT in laboratories and in classrooms is inadequate. There is no technician support during evening lessons.

57. Students' progress is monitored carefully. Students are set targets for performance on entry based upon their GCSE results and their progress against the targets is reviewed several times during the year. Homework is set regularly. Most teachers give constructive written feedback to students on their marked work. However, errors in grammar and spelling are not always corrected. Students on access courses are not given assessment schedules to help them plan their work.

58. General education and vocational science subjects can be studied at all levels on the main sites. Students can also study a mixture of vocational and academic subjects. There is a good range of vocational and access courses. Part-time courses leading to access qualifications at different levels and in science and health science can be studied at times to suit the needs of individual students. Students can study an OCN level 2 course to prepare themselves for the access to HE course or as an alternative to GCSE. No specialist short courses are offered for employers.

59. Students value the help and guidance they get from their teachers outside of their lessons. Tutorials on access courses are well planned and students are helped effectively to develop their study skills and manage their time well. Students receive good advice and guidance when applying to HE. The provision of additional learning support is well organised. Support workers sit alongside students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in lessons to provide them with individual support.

Leadership and management

60. Management of the area is satisfactory. Curriculum 2000 has been successfully implemented. Challenging targets for retention and pass rates are set, but many of these were not met in 2002. Staff from different sites do not meet together regularly. Not enough attention is paid to learning and the self-assessment report does not adequately evaluate the quality of teaching and learning. GCSE courses are poorly managed. The allocation of teaching hours for GCSE courses does not meet the needs of some students.

Construction

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

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

Strengths

- high retention rates on many courses
- high pass rates on the majority of courses
- extensive range of courses
- mostly well-equipped and modern workshops.

Weaknesses

- poor teaching of theory in many lessons
- failure of many modern apprentices to meet the requirements of their apprenticeship framework
- poor co-ordination and development of construction provision
- inadequate classroom accommodation.

Scope of provision

61. The college offers an extensive range of full-time and part-time courses in construction from foundation to advanced levels. These include specialist courses in electrical installation, furniture making and upholstery; gas services installation and maintenance; heating and ventilating; street works and highways; and signmaking. Technician courses include access to HE in construction, a foundation degree in construction and a well-established skills workshop for women. At the time of the inspection, 64% of the 947 students were aged 19 or over, 200 were female and 76 were students from minority ethnic backgrounds. There were 255 work-based learners.

Achievement and standards

62. Retention rates on most courses are at, or above, national averages and some are high. For example, in 2002, all students who started NVQ level 2 courses in heating and ventilating and painting and decorating courses completed them. However, retention rates for NVQ level 2 plumbing were low. Retention rates on level 2 construction crafts declined in 2002 and are now around national averages. Most pass rates have improved over the last three years and are at, or above, national averages. In 2002, pass rates were high for level 3 craft courses. Gas services installation and maintenance, highways and painting and

decorating all had pass rates of 100%. However, pass rates on level 1 crafts declined in 2002, to slightly below national averages. Few modern apprentices meet all the requirements of the apprenticeship framework. Only 4 of the 60 modern apprentices who enrolled in April 1998 achieved the full framework in the agreed time.

63. The standard of most students' work is at least satisfactory. In some practical lessons it is high. In painting and decorating, brickwork and signwork, students with low prior attainment achieve well. Brickwork students provide good photographic evidence of the work undertaken in the workplace. Students on construction technician courses produce good coursework and carry out assignments well.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
Construction crafts	1	No. of starts	164	158	82
		% retention	78	83	78
		% pass rate	48	77	64
Construction crafts	2	No. of starts	264	205	148
		% retention	**	**	79
		% pass rate	**	**	74
GNVQ intermediate construction	2	No. of starts	11	11	8
		% retention	91	82	63
		% pass rate	90	56	100
Construction crafts	3	No. of starts	65	51	89
		% retention	**	86	91
		% pass rate	**	75	77
National diploma in construction	3	No. of starts	52	52	50
		% retention	94	69	72
		% pass rate	93	88	92

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
Access to HE in construction	3	No. of starts	16	21	21
		% retention	75	76	71
		% pass rate	100	87	87

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

** unreliable data

Quality of education and training

64. Most teaching is at least satisfactory, but a small proportion is good or better. Practical lessons are better taught than theory lessons. In painting and decorating and heating and ventilation, teachers use practical projects effectively to help students develop their craft competences. They frequently check their students' work and explain how it can be further improved. One lesson on signwork was attended by a mixed group of school pupils and adults. The teacher had designed a range of tasks that all students could complete. Each student's completed work was displayed in the adjoining corridor. To extend their knowledge, the more able students used ICT to design and cut signs. In brickwork, full-time and part-time students from different courses are taught together in the workshop. They make good progress, because teachers work together well and provide individual support to students by ensuring that they undertake tasks that take account of their different levels of ability and experience.

65. In the less effective lessons, activities do not meet the students' individual learning needs. Some teachers do not explain the purpose of the lesson clearly, talk too long, and cover too many topics without checking students' learning. Most students are then reluctant to participate, while some become easily bored or distracted. Some teachers use inappropriate examples, confusing their students. For example, in one lesson on key skills, an assignment for calculating areas and volumes did not relate to construction and used units of measurement not recognised by the industry. In another lesson, on the sine rule, the teacher advised students that it was usual to work to one decimal point. This, however, led to the students suggesting dimensions for components that would be unacceptable in a real-life project.

66. Most workshops are spacious and well equipped. Facilities for electrical installation and mechanical engineering services are particularly good. They are poor for upholstery. New workshops and classrooms are being built. The shape and size of many classrooms adversely affect teaching and learning and some suffer from high noise levels from adjoining areas. In one lesson, three technician students had their backs to the whiteboard, facing other students because of insufficient space. Full-time teachers and technicians are well qualified, but some do not have recent experience of industry. The majority of part-time teachers do

not have teaching qualifications and some do not understand the requirements of NVQ and modern apprenticeship programmes.

67. Internal verification is generally effective. Assessment procedures are applied rigorously. Student progress is thoroughly monitored and displayed on regularly updated wall charts. Most assignments are correctly marked, but some teachers do not provide sufficient comments to help students improve their work. There is little work-based assessment except in plumbing, and heating and ventilating. The progress of work-based learners is formally reviewed every 12 weeks and learners can grade specific aspects of the support provided. However, these learners are not set demanding targets.

68. The college has successfully introduced accredited courses to develop the skills of those in employment as well as adults who wish to enter the industry. Some are provided at community-based venues. School pupils have excellent opportunities to learn craft skills through courses provided for schools. Short courses are offered to local industry. The college is a designated centre of excellence for electrical installation.

69. Most students are well supported. Induction and careers guidance are well organised. Additional support tutors provide help to students in theory lessons.

Leadership and management

70. The management of the area has weaknesses. There is no effective development plan for construction. Attendance, retention and pass rates on college-based courses have improved, but remain poor on work-based learning. The quality of the provision varies considerably between sites and there is little sharing of good practice. The self-assessment report identified many of the weaknesses identified by inspectors, but inspectors considered that some analysis was not sufficiently rigorous. The co-ordination of on-the-job and off-the-job training is poor. Employers do not receive sufficient information about the modern apprenticeship programme or NVQs, or the potential to provide evidence of skills gained by trainees in the workplace.

Engineering

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

Strengths

- high pass rates
- good teaching in workshops and in computer-aided engineering lessons
- a broad range of provision.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates
- failure of many modern apprentices to complete their apprenticeships successfully
- too many poorly taught lessons
- poor assessment practice
- unsatisfactory curriculum management.

Scope of provision

71. The college offers full-time and part-time courses in manufacturing and mechanical engineering, electronics, and motor vehicle servicing and bodywork, at levels 1 to 3. It also provides Higher National Certificate (HNC) courses, a HE foundation year and an access to HE course. At the time of the inspection, there were 130 full-time students aged 16 to 18 and 20 full-time adult students, with equal numbers on motor vehicle and electrical and mechanical courses. There were 500 part-time students on electronic and manufacturing courses and 170 modern apprentices. Sixty school pupils were studying GCSE engineering.

Achievement and standards

72. Pass rates have improved and are now mostly high. On the full-time general vocational course at level 3, for example, they have been above 80% for two years. Pass rates are high on computer-aided engineering courses. On the City and Guilds craft courses, pass rates vary. For example, in the last two years mechanical craft courses at level 2 have been well below national averages, whereas on the fabrication and welding course they have been above. Retention rates have deteriorated and in 2002 were mostly at or below national averages. They were low in 2002 on both the first diploma and the GNVQ intermediate courses and have been low on courses such as the national certificate in engineering and level 2 electronic servicing in the last two years. On craft courses at level 3, however, retention rates are high. Few modern apprentices are retained or achieve their apprenticeship framework. Of those who started their foundation motor vehicle modern apprenticeship in

1998, only 25% were retained. Of those who started their advanced engineering modern apprenticeship in 1998, only 16% met all the requirements of the full framework.

73. The standard of students' written and practical work is satisfactory. Most students make good use of computing software. However, in some cases students use the Internet without providing suitable analysis and commentary. Trainees' portfolios and students' notes are often poorly organised, making it difficult to find information and to monitor their progress.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
City and Guilds 6956 motor vehicle	1	No. of starts	46	46	22
		% retention	60	82	73
		% pass rate	59	65	81
City and Guilds 229 fabrication and welding	2	No. of starts	19	26	17
		% retention	**	58	82
		% pass rate	**	69	55
City and Guilds 228 mechanical	2	No. of starts	10	27	16
		% retention	**	74	63
		% pass rate	**	30	50
First diploma in engineering	2	No. of starts	15	14	17
		% retention	57	69	65
		% pass rate	38	56	64
GNVQ advanced/AVCE engineering	3	No. of starts	28	16	14
		% retention	**	75	64
		% pass rate	**	83	100

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
National certificate in engineering	3	No. of starts	38	41	27
		% retention	**	61	52
		% pass rate	**	58	92

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

** unreliable data

Quality of education and training

74. Most teaching is satisfactory and a small proportion is good or better. The best teaching takes place in practical workshops, and in computer-aided engineering. In these, the lessons are well planned and practical activities are well organised. Students are able to work on individual tasks helped by the teacher. In a motor vehicle lesson, students worked in pairs to remove, check and replace electrical components. Each task had to be completed twice on different cars. Up-to-date workshop manuals were readily available. The teacher carefully checked that all students understood what they were doing and why. In the better theory lessons, teachers use work sheets, which are graded for difficulty. Students can work at their own pace while the teacher provides helpful and specific support for individual students.

75. Too many lessons are poor. Many lessons are badly planned and opportunities to use demonstrations or practical work to explain difficult concepts are missed. In some lessons, teachers give students handouts that are written in complex English and they do not check that the students have grasped the topic. In others, there is an over-reliance on copying notes from the whiteboard. Assignment briefs are often too long, too difficult or not clearly written so that teachers spend too much time attempting to explain what is required. Students therefore do very little productive work and fail to make satisfactory progress. Key skills are taught as an integral part of craft programmes. However, often the assignments involve several tasks artificially linked together and students become easily bored.

76. Resources for engineering are satisfactory. The range of workshops and laboratories is adequate. Much of the equipment they contain is old but serviceable. Some laboratories are too small and cluttered with equipment and some workshops are untidy. Some laboratories, computer rooms and workshops do not have enough space for students to sit and make notes. Classrooms are drab. Teachers are appropriately qualified, but there are insufficient vocationally qualified assessors for work-based learning, leading to slow progress for some trainees. Few teachers have recent industrial experience.

77. There is poor assessment practice. Some assignment briefs fail to include the requirements for key skills accreditation. Teachers do not use assessment effectively to plan further learning nor do they give students sufficient feedback about the quality of their written work. Internal verification is not consistently applied. Insufficient attention is paid

during tutorials to students' performance and to setting clear plans for improvement. Work-based trainees receive little feedback on the quality of their work. Plans for the trainee's work lack detail. There is insufficient assessment by direct observation of activities undertaken in the workplace.

78. The broad range of provision provides good opportunities for progression. Full-time students can gain additional qualifications. For example, general vocational students can study computer-aided design and manufacture and units of NVQ manufacturing. Employers and trainees have a poor knowledge of training programmes.

79. Initial advice and guidance are satisfactory for college-based students and good for work-based learners. New students are assessed and additional learning support provided, where needed, during normal lessons. However, the initial learning plans for work-based trainees do not always identify the additional support required. Training co-ordinators help trainees to find work placements or employment. Full-time students are prepared well for HE.

Leadership and management

80. Management of the area is unsatisfactory. Although team meetings are scheduled, some course teams meet rarely. Others do not give sufficient attention to addressing identified weaknesses. There is not enough sharing of good practice in teaching and learning. Teachers new to a subject are not routinely provided with the learning materials and methods previously used. Course handbooks do not contain some important information such as book lists and assessment schedules. College policies are not always well implemented. Procedures to improve the quality of initial learning plans for work-based learning have been recently introduced. The self-assessment report identified many of the weaknesses in engineering.

Business

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

Strengths

- high pass rates on GCE AS and A level, NVQ administration, personnel and management courses
- high retention rates on administration, personnel and management courses
- extensive range of teaching methods in the best lessons
- effective use of the work experiences of part-time students.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on GNVQ intermediate, text processing and NVQ accounting courses
- too much unimaginative teaching
- insufficiently detailed schemes of work
- ineffective course team meetings.

Scope of provision

81. The college provides a wide range of courses from foundation to advanced levels in business studies, administration, management and professional studies. There are specialist courses for legal executives and purchasing and supply. Some courses are offered at all the college's main centres, others at only one centre. At the time of the inspection, nearly 70% of students were aged 19 and over and most were studying part time. There were 950 full-time and 1,820 part-time students.

Achievement and standards

82. Pass rates are high on GCE AS and A-level courses. GCE A-level accounting and GCE AS and A-level business studies, for example, have had pass rates for the last two years of over 90%. These results are good when compared with those predicted from students' prior GCSE performance. However, pass and retention rates are poor on AVCE and GNVQ intermediate courses. Pass rates on NVQ administration courses are well above national averages at levels 1, 3 and 4. Pass rates for single-subject secretarial awards at level 1 are poor. Pass rates on legal and medical secretaries' courses are high, but poor on NVQ accounting levels 2 and 3. Management and marketing courses have high retention rates. Pass rates are high on management certificates and diplomas, but low on the certificate of marketing. Consistently high pass and retention rates are a feature of personnel courses. The access to HE programme has high pass rates, but low retention rates.

83. Standards are high on advanced level courses where students demonstrate good skills of analysis and evaluation. For example, in an assignment considering saving, investment and pension schemes, students made reasoned conclusions about which products offered best value and why. Students in administration use keyboards confidently and understand theoretical concepts. On management and professional courses, students are able to use complex data on company performance on exercises in strategic planning. Students on the GNVQ intermediate have difficulty using appropriate business terms and concepts; the quality of their written work shows basic grammatical and spelling errors.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
Text processing stage 1	1	No. of starts	385	346	297
		% retention	71	83	81
		% pass rate	57	61	54
GNVQ intermediate business	2	No. of starts	68	56	61
		% retention	79	70	64
		% pass rate	74	69	47
NVQ administration	2	No. of starts	89	63	51
		% retention	80	90	82
		% pass rate	73	78	60
GCE A-level business studies	3	No. of starts	150	164	88
		% retention	76	70	97*
		% pass rate	80	90	95
GNVQ advanced/AVCE business	3	No. of starts	135	125	106
		% retention	78	73	67
		% pass rate	83	75	63

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
Certificate and diplomas in management	4	No. of starts	70	24	43
		% retention	94	100	84
		% pass rate	76	100	100

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

*retention rates for GCE A level are in-year

Quality of education and training

84. Most teaching is at least satisfactory and a small proportion is good or better. Lessons are generally well planned and teachers help students to learn in a way that suits their needs. A shorthand lesson was conducted at a brisk pace introducing a good variety of new theories and frequent periods of dictation and transposition to practice and consolidate previous learning. Teachers have high expectations of their students, and pose probing and targeted questions to check their learning. Handouts contain realistic case studies and extension tasks. For example, AVCE students were given extracts from newspapers to help them understand the nature and importance of international trade. The work roles and experiences of part-time students on courses in management, professional and trade union studies are used effectively in assignment work and classroom discussion.

85. Too much teaching, although satisfactory, is unimaginative. Some teachers talk too much and miss opportunities for whole class discussion or structured group activities. For example, in a lesson on purchasing and supply, the teacher explained the legal position regarding contracts for over 30 minutes without asking students questions to check their understanding. In some lessons, students work on assignments for long periods without any change of activity and so easily become bored. Some schemes of work comprise merely lists of topics without reference to activities, resources or key skills.

86. Teachers are appropriately qualified, but many lack recent vocational experience. Relatively few have taken the good opportunities available for short secondments. The range of resources for business available in the different learning centres, including texts and journals, are extensive and of good quality. There is, however, no software on the IT network to support the development of keyboarding skills. Most classroom accommodation is fit for purpose. At Castle, the lack of available specialist IT rooms means computerised accounts classes are taught in the learning centre.

87. Teachers mark their students' work thoroughly. Errors in grammar and spelling are corrected and clear written feedback is given to most students to help them improve their performance. However, some grades awarded for work produced by students on vocational courses at higher levels are overgenerous. Assessment and monitoring of students' progress are satisfactory. Progress reviews for full-time students do not always take place according

to the agreed timetable and there is no formal process for part-time students to have their progress reviewed.

88. Courses for women returning to study and skills-based courses in community-based venues successfully attract students who would not traditionally enter FE. Students are able to study for additional qualifications, for example, audio transcription, computerised accounts or a GCE AS subject. They have good opportunities to progress to higher levels of study including the Higher National Diploma (HND) in business and the higher diploma in administrative and secretarial procedures. Full-time NVQ administration students undertake work experience, but there are no opportunities for students on GNVQ and AVCE courses. There are gaps in provision at foundation level. Little part-time evening provision, particularly management and professional studies, is offered at the central and southern centres. There are few formal links with employers.

89. Full-time students and those on NVQ accounting courses take an initial assessment to identify their learning support needs. Additional learning support is provided when needed. Tutorials help to raise students' awareness of issues such as race and disability. However, too often tutors merely use tutorials to help students catch up with their work. Because many tutors work in different centres, students cannot easily contact them outside formal lessons.

Leadership and management

90. Management of the curriculum is satisfactory. Course files are well organised and include details of assessments and reviews. Equality of opportunity is promoted well. Targets for retention and pass rates are set for each course, but they are not reviewed frequently enough to address under performing courses. Reviews for management and professional studies combine too many courses together so that the action plan is too generalised. Attendance at course team meetings is often poor. The self-assessment report did not focus sufficiently on students' achievement data.

Information and communication technology

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

Strengths

- good student progression from foundation to higher level courses
- wide range of courses both in the college and in community-based venues
- effective support for students at the Square Mile centres
- comprehensive schemes of work and good learning materials
- high pass and retention rates on GNVQ intermediate IT.

Weaknesses

- insufficient involvement of students in too many lessons
- very low pass rates for IT key skills
- unsatisfactory attendance rates on many courses
- limited access to some specialist software.

Scope of provision

91. The college offers an extensive range of courses from entry level to HE. Full-time provision includes: GNVQ, AVCE and GCE AS and A-level courses. Part-time courses include those leading to the CISCO Certified Network Associate (CCNA) qualification, and City and Guilds certificates in computer applications. Computing and IT courses are available at all the main centres, 2 large Square Mile venues and over 40 community-based venues. At the time of the inspection, there were over 3,300 students, of whom 29% were students aged 16 to 18 and 56% were from widening participation areas.

Achievement and standards

92. Pass rates are high on GCE AS IT, but below national averages on GCE A-level IT and GCE A-level computing. Pass and retention rates are very high on the GNVQ intermediate IT, and a high proportion of students achieve high grades. Pass rates on the IT key skills programme are very low at 2.5%. Retention rates on the City and Guilds diploma are low at levels 1 and 2, but at the national average at level 3. Retention rates are high on GCE AS and A-level IT.

93. Nearly all students show interest and enthusiasm for their subjects. When they are working individually, they are good at helping each other. Adults develop good individual

skills at the Square Mile and community-based venues. Students on the GNVQ intermediate produce work of a high standard. The standard of students' work on other courses is satisfactory. Student progression from the GNVQ intermediate to the AVCE course is good. The attendance rate at lessons was low at 66%.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
Computer literacy and information technology 1 year	1	No. of starts	916	821	909
		% retention	81	83	78
		% pass rate	62	62	49
City and Guilds 7261 certificate in computer applications	1	No. of starts	363	573	420
		% retention	47	43	51
		% pass rate	65	90	89
GNVQ intermediate IT	2	No. of starts	92	108	89
		% retention	83	87	87
		% pass rate	64	80	87
City and Guilds 7261 advanced diploma in computer applications	3	No. of starts	15	43	40
		% retention	80	67	68
		% pass rate	50	71	92
GNVQ advanced IT and AVCE (double award) IT	3	No. of starts	66	97	143
		% retention	76	71	71
		% pass rate	56	80	80
GCE A-level IT and information systems	3	No. of starts	67	89	87
		% retention	76	73	93*
		% pass rate	81	63	80

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

** retention rates for GCE A level are in-year

Quality of education and training

94. Most teaching is satisfactory and a low proportion is good or better. Course teams share learning materials which they review and update each year. The materials are good, and include additional exercises for the most able students to complete. In the better lessons, teachers start by explaining the objectives of the lesson and the skills that the students should develop. For example, in one lesson the teacher demonstrated the selection structures in Pascal and how to boundary test such structures using pseudocode. The students were able to show in a variety of examples that they could develop their own pseudocode and create suitable test data. A feature of some lessons is the skilful use of individual and group tasks to maintain students' interest. In a GNVQ intermediate lesson, the teacher began by explaining how countries changed from agrarian to industrial societies. Students were then asked to consider the impact of ICT on today's society. They first individually identified the health hazards facing those working in IT, before jointly discussing the need for legislation on health and safety and data protection.

95. In too many lessons, however, teachers rely on students to work through workbooks and do not spend enough time checking that students understood what they are doing. Many students therefore work through the materials without developing their knowledge of the topic. For example, in one lesson, students merely entered formulae in spreadsheets without understanding what the formulae meant or how to create similar formulae in other situations. In several long lessons, the pace of the work was too slow and too little was achieved.

96. Teachers are appropriately qualified and have up-to-date knowledge of their subjects. For example, several have a certificate in on-line teaching. Individual students have good access to computer hardware. However, the ordering and installation of new software is poorly managed. For example, on one course a module was dropped because suitable programming software was not available. Slow log on times often hold up the start of lessons. Level 2 students in one centre were making good use of the available software to create web pages. In another centre, however, technical difficulties meant that web design software would not run across the network; in a community centre, students could only save their web pages to floppy disc and this restricted their progress.

97. Students receive clear written feedback on the standard of their work to help them improve their performance. Their progress is monitored carefully. Teachers use initial assessment and the GCSE results of students aged 16 to 18 to set them targets for performance. Achievement against the targets is regularly reviewed.

98. The college offers ICT provision in many locations across the city including primary schools, the Square Mile centres, working men's clubs and community associations as well as its main sites. Many courses are designed for students who have had little previous success in education or who are unfamiliar with computers. There are very good opportunities to progress from foundation to intermediate and advanced levels. The college is certified as a

training centre by major software and hardware producers. It has been designated as a digital centre of vocational excellence.

99. Induction arrangements are effective. Students value the support teachers give them. Tutorial support meets the needs of both students aged 16 to 18 and adults well. The well-organised support given to adult students at the Square Mile centres helps students to succeed. Arrangements to provide additional learning support to those who need it are effective. The quality of careers advice and guidance varies between courses.

Leadership and management

100. Management of ICT is satisfactory. Courses are well planned and course teams work together effectively. Schemes of work and resources are shared between sites using the college network and teachers meet regularly to review and update course materials. The self-assessment report did not identify key strengths and weaknesses. Data on students' achievements in relation to their previous attainment are not used effectively to monitor the performance of the curriculum area. There is insufficient sharing of good practice in teaching.

Hospitality and catering

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

Strengths

- much good teaching
- high pass rates on the national licensee's certificate
- high pass and retention rates for level 3 food preparation and cooking
- high practical skills of students.

Weaknesses

- poor pass and retention rates in craft bakery
- failure of modern apprentices to meet requirements of their apprenticeship framework
- poor pass rates for part-time level 2 food preparation and cooking.

Scope of provision

101. The college offers a good range of hospitality, catering and bakery courses from level 1 to 3. Full-time courses include those leading to NVQ, AVCE and other vocational qualifications. Part-time courses include those leading to NVQs, and qualifications in sugar craft and specialist crafts. Short courses include the national licensees' certificate and hygiene certificates. Courses are provided at the college and in the workplace. At the time of the inspection, there were 193 full-time and 151 part-time students. Twenty-eight trainees were on either foundation or advanced modern apprenticeships. Some 80% of full-time students were aged 16 to 18 and 90% of part-time students were adults.

Achievement and standards

102. Pass rates for the national licensee's certificate are consistently very high. The pass rate on NVQ level 2 food and drink service has improved over the last three years and is now well above the national average, although the retention rate was poor in 2001. Retention and pass rates on NVQ level 3 food preparation and cooking have substantially improved since 2000, and are now high. The retention rate for pastry cooks and patissiers basic is high. In 2001, most full-time, but few part-time, students who started the NVQ level 2 food preparation and cooking achieved the qualification. Pass and retention rates on NVQ level 2 craft bakery remain low. Few modern apprentices meet all the requirements of the apprenticeship framework.

103. Hospitality and catering students are interested in their studies. Most develop good professional cookery and food and drink service skills. In the college's restaurant and production kitchens they work well in teams and on their own to prepare, cook and serve food and drink to customers. However, some of their knife and table clearing skills are unsatisfactory. Most NVQ portfolios are well organised. The standard of students' written work is satisfactory. The college's hospitality and catering students regularly do well in regional and national student competitions. Many students progress to employment or to further courses at the college.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
NVQ food and drink service	2	No. of starts	47	61	65
		% retention	83	65	75
		% pass rate	57	65	84
Awarding body consortium pastry cooks and patissiers basic	2	No. of starts	78	53	60
		% retention	42	51	83
		% pass rate	50	70	64
NVQ food preparation and cooking	2	No. of starts	123	115	104
		% retention	60	63	69
		% pass rate	55	84	82
NVQ craft baking	2	No. of starts	34	17	25
		% retention	65	76	48
		% pass rate	45	77	75
NVQ food preparation and cooking general	3	No. of starts	6	29	24
		% retention	50	86	83
		% pass rate	0	96	85

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
National licensee's certificate	3	No. of starts	285	320	257
		% retention	100	100	99
		% pass rate	97	90	92

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

Quality of education and training

104. Most teaching is good. Lessons are well structured. Schemes of work are reviewed and updated annually to take account of changes in awarding body criteria and in the hospitality industry. Comprehensive lesson plans indicate teaching methods and learning activities, resources, awarding body criteria, the application of key skills, and how the lesson relates to previous and future lessons. The aims and objectives of lessons are shared with students. Teachers organise practical activities to take into account students' different levels and abilities and progress on the course. Demonstrations are well planned. In a lesson on roasting and grilling, the teacher clearly explained the culinary techniques used before showing how to remove the shoulder blade from a shoulder of lamb. Throughout there was emphasis on hygiene and the need to avoid cross contamination. In most theory lessons, teachers make good use of questioning to check students' understanding of topics and summarise the main points of the lesson well. In all lessons, there is a strong emphasis on students working to current industrial practice. Well-organised industrial visits and work placements help students to broaden their understanding of the hospitality industry. Menus for both college-based students and work-based learners provide a good mix of new and traditional styles of cookery and service to help students develop their culinary and service skills. When necessary, students with additional learning needs are provided with extra support to complete their work.

105. In a few lessons there is not enough work to keep all the students occupied. The links between on-the-job and off-the-job training in work-based learning are not well developed. Short-term targets are not included in the individual learning plans of work-based learners.

106. Teachers are appropriately qualified. They have relevant prior industrial experience. There is a good range of specialist accommodation and equipment, including production, skills, pastry and larder kitchens, a restaurant and a bakery. However, some ovens and boiling tables are old. Classrooms and specialist accommodation often feature interesting wall displays to stimulate learning. The range of library resources is adequate, but some book stock refers to qualifications and syllabuses that are no longer in use.

107. Students' work is marked accurately, but some teachers do not provide sufficient feedback to students to help them improve the quality of their work. Errors in spelling are

not always corrected. Teachers monitor their students' progress closely. The arrangements for assessment and verification are effective.

108. Links with local industry are good, particularly in bakery. The college offers a peripatetic NVQ assessment service for the school meals' service in Sheffield. Leading chefs visit the college to work with students. The range of hospitality, catering and bakery courses is broad and meets the needs of students and industry effectively. Students can progress from foundation to advanced level courses, and work towards additional qualifications such as the food hygiene certificate.

109. Students are well informed about the wide range of student support services that they can use. The well-organised induction helps them to settle effectively into their studies. Careers guidance is good. It includes presentations by visiting speakers from industry. Tutorial support is good.

Leadership and management

110. Management of the area is satisfactory. The regular meetings of managers and staff are well recorded. Target setting, using national benchmarking data and past student performance, is well established. In most cases, the targets that are set for each course are met. However, students' achievements remain low on some courses. The self-assessment report identified many of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision.

Sports, leisure and tourism

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

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates on most sports and leisure courses
- very good teaching
- excellent specialist facilities at the Norton centre
- very good course materials, and student course guides
- good range of additional qualifications.

Weaknesses

- insufficient industrial updating for staff in travel and tourism
- lack of opportunities for students to participate in competitive college-wide sports fixtures
- lack of community-based evening courses.

Scope of provision

111. The college offers sport, leisure and tourism courses at foundation, intermediate, advanced and higher levels. Full-time courses include City and Guilds levels 1 to 3, first and national diplomas in sport science, GNVQ intermediate in leisure and tourism, and GCE AS and A-level sport and physical education. Twelve part-time national governing body awards are offered including the Football Association (FA) junior team managers award. At the time of the inspection, there were nearly 1,200 students. Of these, 40% were female and 85% were aged 16 to 18. Some 80% of students were on sport and leisure courses.

Achievement and standards

112. Full-time level 2 courses with high retention and pass rates include City and Guilds courses in recreation and leisure and sport and leisure, national diploma in leisure studies, and first and national diplomas in sports science. The pass rate on the community sports leader award short course is high, at 93%, compared with the national average of 54%. GCSE sports, games and recreation has had 100% pass rates for each of the last two years. At level 3, the national diploma in sports science has had high pass rates over the past three years together with high retention rates. GCE AS and A-level sports, games and recreation have high pass rates, but low retention rates. Some additional courses have maintained high pass rates over the past three years including the assistant teacher (swimming) certificate and the FA junior team managers course.

113. There are low and declining retention and pass rates on some travel and tourism courses. The Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA) travel agents certificate and resort representatives have low and declining retention and pass rates. Retention rates have also declined and are now poor on the on Tour Managers' Certificate. Although the retention rate is satisfactory for the national diploma in travel and tourism the pass rate is significantly below the national average.

A sample of retention and pass rates in sports, leisure and tourism, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
FA junior team managers (short)	1	No. of starts	102	95	124
		% retention	90	97	93
		% pass rate	94	93	88
Community sports leader award (1 year)	2	No. of starts	49	62	69
		% retention	86	85	83
		% pass rate	50	89	95
City and Guilds 4810 recreation and leisure industries pt.2	2	No. of starts	90	82	**
		% retention	93	93	**
		% pass rate	82	91	**
GCE A-level sports, games and recreation	3	No. of starts	64	58	38
		% retention	75	64	92
		% pass rate	93	97	94
National diploma in travel and tourism	3	No. of starts	56	61	50
		% retention	86	72	66
		% pass rate	49	62	70
National diploma in sports science	3	No. of starts	32	24	39
		% retention	87	88	90
		% pass rate	83	100	88

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

** unreliable data

Quality of education and training

114. Most teaching is good. Lessons are well planned. Teaching methods are frequently imaginative and innovative. There is good use of IT and video in demonstrations. For example, in a sports studies lesson, students watched a demonstration of a spirometer with an IT recording device to study lung functioning and then used a role-play exercise to consolidate what they had learned. On advanced level sport and recreation programmes, practical work is carefully related to theory to help students understand difficult concepts. Students followed a theory lesson on goal shooting techniques in basketball, with group work in the gymnasium. By recording on video their performance they were able to discuss the vocational relevance of theory work. Teachers provide interesting activities and materials for students of different abilities to maintain their interest and motivation. In a travel and tourism lesson, students worked individually on a task involving route planning and then checked their findings in groups using travel directories. Good attention is paid to health and safety and students are made well aware of potential risks. Teachers insist that students wear suitable clothing for all activities.

115. In a minority of lessons, teachers set students work which is not sufficiently demanding. Some lessons are taught in ways that involve too much talking by teachers and not enough participation by students. Most teachers make good use of ICT in their teaching, but in a few lessons the presentations are unimaginative.

116. Facilities and equipment at Norton are excellent. They include a sports hall, swimming pool, sports science laboratory, multi-gym, indoor and outdoor tennis facilities and outdoor playing surfaces. The sports hall at Parson Cross is in poor condition. Most teachers have sufficient professional qualifications, but there are not enough opportunities for teachers in travel and tourism to undertake industrial updating. Technicians provide good support to students and teachers, including assisting with equipment in lessons and helping students to research their projects.

117. Homework is set regularly. Teachers mark the completed work carefully and provide students with useful written comments on how it can be improved. Students make good use of the well-written guides that cover the course content, organisation and assessment requirements of each course in simple language.

118. The college enrichment programme provides good opportunities for students to take part in recreational team games. However, students do not have enough opportunities to participate in competitive team games or in individual sports at regional and national competitions. Most students gain additional qualifications, such as the community sports leader award, which improve their chances of gaining employment or entering HE. Course guides contain positive images of people with disabilities, people from minority ethnic groups and women participating in a wide range of activities. The college has successfully

attracted students who would not have usually entered FE to study sport, leisure, travel and tourism courses. There are no evening-only courses at any centre.

119. Induction arrangements are effective. Tutorial support is good. Students benefit from one-to-one discussions and the opportunities for confidential advice and guidance. Not all students who are identified as needing additional learning support are given it.

Leadership and management

120. Curriculum management is good. All staff have access to a personal computer and staff and students e-mail each other. Staff and course team meetings are held regularly and all meetings have agendas and comprehensive minutes. There is good monitoring of recruitment, attendance and retention and pass rates. Strategies for improving retention and pass rates are carefully considered. Improvement targets are set for all courses and underachieving courses are highlighted and sometimes closed. The self-assessment report was detailed and identified the area's strengths and weaknesses. However, managers do not place sufficient emphasis on the sharing of good practice in teaching.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy

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

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

Strengths

- high pass rates on beauty therapy and short courses
- effective additional support for students in the workplace
- wide range of courses
- well-organised enrichment activities
- careful monitoring of students' progress.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on many full-time courses
- failure of many modern apprentices to complete their apprenticeships successfully
- inadequate management and implementation of key skills
- poor student attendance and lack of punctuality
- insufficient use of target setting at course level.

Scope of provision

121. The college offers a broad range of full-time and part-time courses in hairdressing, beauty, sports and holistic therapies. Full-time courses range from levels 1 to 3. Part-time courses include a range of holistic therapy courses and NVQs in both hairdressing and beauty therapy. At the time of the inspection, there were 303 full-time students of whom 82% were aged 16 to 18. There were 434 part-time students, most of whom were adults. Some 24% of students were male and 19% were from minority ethnic groups. There were 124 foundation and advanced modern apprentices in hairdressing and 5 advanced modern apprentices in beauty therapy.

Achievement and standards

122. Pass rates on NVQ level 2 and short and specialist courses in beauty therapy have been high for the last three years. Pass rates on the NVQ level 2 one-year course in hairdressing, which recruits mainly full-time students aged 16 to 18, are also high. However, pass rates on NVQ level 2 two-year and NVQ level 3 part-time courses in hairdressing have

been consistently low for the last three years. Retention rates on the majority of full-time courses are low. Much of the college data on hairdressing and beauty therapy courses was unreliable. Few full-time students achieve key skills qualifications. Framework achievement and the achievement of NVQs by modern apprentices are very low.

123. The standard of students' practical work is satisfactory. Written work and assignments produced by students on part-time beauty and holistic therapy courses are of a high standard. It is generally satisfactory on other courses. Students are not punctual and their attendance is poor.

A sample of retention and pass rates in hairdressing and beauty therapy, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
NVQ hairdressing (1 year)	1	No. of starts	132	104	110
		% retention	66	**	69
		% pass rate	85	**	67
NVQ hairdressing (1 year - part time)	2	No. of starts	115	75	93
		% retention	**	**	48
		% pass rate	**	**	74
NVQ beauty therapy (2 year)	2	No. of starts	56	55	44
		% retention	**	**	55
		% pass rate	**	**	95
NVQ hairdressing (2 year)	3	No. of starts	11	17	19
		% retention	**	**	47
		% pass rate	**	**	57
NVQ beauty therapy (1 year)	3	No. of starts	44	38	58
		% retention	**	**	91
		% pass rate	**	**	88

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
Diploma in sports therapy	3	No. of starts	15	31	14
		% retention	100	**	57
		% pass rate	67	**	100

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

* unreliable data

Quality of education and training

124. Most teaching is satisfactory and a small proportion of lessons are good or better. Good lessons are well planned, develop learning in a logical sequence and encourage students to think more about their subjects. In a reflexology lesson, the teacher questioned students on how to apply treatments. Their replies developed into a lively discussion that extended their knowledge of client care, treatment application and health, safety and legislation. The teacher effectively managed the discussion and used humour sensitively to emphasise key points. The students were motivated, thoroughly enjoyed the lesson and were able to confidently apply their knowledge in the following practical session. In a lesson on blend epilation, the teacher clearly explained the controls of a new piece of electrical equipment. The teacher then organised the students into small groups, and through close supervision and effective questioning the students were able to operate the machine competently.

125. A significant minority of the teaching is dull. Many schemes of work are no more than a brief list of topics. Few lesson plans focus sufficiently on learning outcomes. Teachers do not consider sufficiently the different needs and levels of ability of students within their classes and often fail to check students' understanding. In theory lessons, teachers do too much talking and fail to make sufficient demands on students. In these lessons, teachers' direct questions at a small number of the more able students without engaging other quieter members of the group who often do not participate at all. In a few practical lessons, teachers do not insist that students wear suitable clothing and hygiene practice is poor. Some teachers fail to use basic teaching resources correctly.

126. Teachers have appropriate vocational qualifications and experience of the industry. Hairdressing and beauty therapy facilities are satisfactory, but some areas are poorly decorated. Whiteboards in some classrooms are in poor condition and difficult to read. There are not enough clients for work-based trainees who attend college once a week to work on for assessment purposes.

127. Students' progress is monitored carefully. Where appropriate, parents are kept well informed about students' progress. College tutors visit employers every 6 to 8 weeks to discuss the progress of work-based trainees. Some teachers provide helpful comments on students' tests and assignments, but others give cursory comments and fail to indicate how

the student may improve. On foundation level courses, teachers do not often correct poor spelling and grammatical errors.

128. The college has close links with employers. Students can take a wide range of additional qualifications as well as their main qualification. Some work-based trainees can complete their training programme totally at their place of employment, whilst others attend lessons one day a week. To attract students from groups that have not successfully entered FE taster courses in techniques such as braiding, threading and henna painting are provided at community-based venues across the city. The college offers taster programmes and an NVQ level 1 in hairdressing for school pupils aged under 16. The wide range of enrichment activities include demonstrations by external speakers, visits to trade shows and exhibitions and participation in student competitions.

129. Two members of staff monitor and chase up students who do not attend regularly. It is too early to judge the effectiveness of this new initiative. Tutorials for full-time students help them develop their understanding of equality and diversity issues. All students take an initial assessment to identify their learning support needs. Work-based trainees, who have been identified as needing additional support, receive good support from tutors at their place of work.

Leadership and management

130. There are weaknesses in the management of the area. Course files and documents are well maintained. Staff meetings are held weekly, but the minutes are brief and do not contain action points that can be monitored. Course reviews and the self-assessment report are not sufficiently self-critical, and lack detailed analysis of students' achievements. Action plans to address weaknesses are not completed. The few targets that are set for retention and pass rates are usually unrealistic. There is little promotion or monitoring of equality of opportunity in work-based learning. The management of key skills is poor. Some work-based trainees reach the end of their programme before they start to study their key skill awards. Few students achieve key skills qualifications.

Health, social care and childcare

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

Strengths

- very high pass rates for GNVQ advanced health and social care and CACHE diploma
- stimulating teaching relating theory to practice
- well-structured tutorials
- well-managed work placements
- productive community links.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on CACHE certificate in 2002
- inadequate identification of poor teaching practice
- failure to make key skills an integral part of lessons.

Scope of provision

131. The college offers a wide range of full-time and part-time courses in childcare, health, social care and counselling. Students can work towards NVQ, GNVQ, AVCE and CACHE qualifications and units accredited by the Open College Network (OCN). At the time of the inspection, there were 600 students aged 16 to 18 and 35 adults enrolled on full-time courses. Of the 2,030 part-time students, 98% were adults. There were eight modern apprentices.

Achievement and standards

132. Pass rates have been very high on the CACHE Diploma and GNVQ advanced health and social care for the last two years. GNVQ foundation pass rates have steadily increased from below the national average in 2000 to well above the national average in 2002. Retention rates on the CACHE certificate and GNVQ intermediate health and social care declined from above the national average in 2000 to below the national average in 2002. Retention and pass rates on the foundation award in caring for children and young people were low in 2002.

133. Students enjoy their studies. They work conscientiously both on individual activities and in group work. Their written work is well presented. Students develop good practical skills when undertaking work placements. One student confidently applied the information

learned in college on barriers to communication when providing physical support to a client in a work placement, by using a mirror to maintain eye contact even when working behind the client.

A sample of retention and pass rates in health, social care and childcare, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
Caring for young children	1	No. of starts	20	17	28
		% retention	95	88	68
		% pass rate	95	100	79
GNVQ foundation health and social care	1	No. of starts	44	49	39
		% retention	73	78	67
		% pass rate	56	84	85
GNVQ intermediate health and social care	2	No. of starts	68	86	112
		% retention	78	72	71
		% pass rate	79	81	81
CACHE certificate in childcare and education	2	No. of starts	56	63	72
		% retention	88	78	65
		% pass rate	80	78	91
GNVQ advanced health and social care	3	No. of starts	90	132	101
		% retention	73	85	75
		% pass rate	80	89	90
CACHE diploma in childcare and education	3	No. of starts	71	97	128
		% retention	68	77	77
		% pass rate	100	89	97

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

Quality of education and training

134. Much teaching is very good and some is outstanding. In the best lessons, teachers use their professional experience to effectively link theory to practice. In one foundation level lesson on healthy eating, childcare students planned and prepared a well-balanced snack for pre-school children. They then worked in small groups to design games, which helped to extend children's understanding of foods that are healthy. One group of students devised a 'snakes and ladders' game using bananas for the ladders and chocolate bars for the snakes. In another lesson, the teacher used the students' experiences of reading to young children to prompt them to discuss how books can help to prepare children for new and sometimes worrying experiences such as 'going into hospital'. Work placements for full-time students are well managed. Teachers carefully monitor and assess the progress students make in developing their skills in the workplace.

135. The less effective lessons are poorly planned and managed. Some teachers place an over-reliance on discussions that merely involve the anecdotal experiences of the teacher and individual students. Teachers do not use opportunities in lessons to develop key skills. In one lesson, students weighed and measured cookery ingredients, and in another they discussed effective communication with clients, but neither activity was used to develop their key skills of communication or application of number.

136. Nearly 75% of teachers are part time. All are well qualified and most undertake regular professional development. There are sufficient internal verifiers and assessors for work-based activities. Few teachers have been trained to deliver basic skills, although they are expected to teach foundation level numeracy and literacy. Accommodation is generally satisfactory, although some childcare classrooms are small for the size of the classes that use them. Up-to-date key textbooks are readily available for students' use.

137. Teachers monitor the progress of their students carefully and regularly set them individual targets. Assessment is carried out well on most courses. The well-established procedures in health and social care ensure that assignments are of the appropriate level and have clear marking schemes. However, some childminding practice assignments are over-generously marked.

138. Students benefit from good work placements. The strong links with the local community give students good opportunities to progress from foundation to HE courses, to employment or professional training. The links include the Building Pathways programme with Sheffield University and Sheffield Hallam University and six partner local colleges, Educare which co-ordinates level 1 provision in preparation for entry to college courses, and the Millennium Volunteers programme. Students can enrol on many courses at several points in the year. Training is provided for employers in community locations throughout the Sheffield area.

139. Tutorials are well structured and provide good support for students. All students take an initial assessment to identify their learning support needs. The support provided is

generally effective. Full-time students receive good advice and guidance before they commence their studies, but prospective part-time students are not always given sufficient information about their courses.

Leadership and management

140. Management of the area is good. Course teams meet regularly to standardise practices across sites, to monitor course performance against agreed targets for recruitment, retention and attendance, and to monitor the progress students are making. Meetings are minuted and responsibilities are clearly allocated to ensure that action is taken to address issues identified. Team leaders respond positively to views expressed in student questionnaires. For example, they reduced a group size at level 1 and adjusted the time spent on placement and college for a group of childcare students. However, there is insufficient identification of poor teaching practice within the division. There is no formalised programme for the observation of teaching and learning. Teachers only share learning materials and ideas informally.

Visual and performing arts

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

Strengths

- much good teaching
- a broad range of provision
- very good students' work in art and design
- good use of performance to develop students' practical skills
- high pass rates on most courses
- good resources in art and design, dance and drama.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on performing arts courses
- inadequate resources for music
- insufficient focus on improving the quality of the provision.

Scope of provision

141. The college offers a broad range of courses in visual and performing arts from entry level to level 3 in most subjects. Thirty-four different courses are offered, many at several centres throughout the city. The main full-time provision is GCE AS and A-level in graphics and art and design, national diplomas in fine art, graphic design and multimedia, GNVQ intermediate and BTEC foundation diploma. At the time of the inspection, there were 651 full-time students and 1,049 part-time students on visual and performing arts courses. Some 70% of students were aged 19 or over.

Achievement and standards

142. Most courses have high pass rates and on GNVQ intermediate and GCE AS and A-level courses they are very high. Retention rates are low on many courses in performing arts. On many visual arts courses, retention rates have improved and most are now at the national average. Overall, students' attendance was similar to the national average for art and design courses, at 82%. However, it was low in some OCN classes. Students are punctual for their lessons.

143. The practical skills of students on most courses are consistently very good. Second-year national diploma students produce exciting and innovative work in ceramics and

photography. Students on GNVQ intermediate achieve high standards in printing. There is some exceptional observational drawing and painting on the GCE AS and A-level art programmes and on the diploma in foundation studies. Students make very good use of the specialist facilities and equipment. Many students progress to HE.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GNVQ intermediate art and design	2	No. of starts	55	46	56
		% retention	93	89	80
		% pass rate	90	83	87
GCSE art studies fine arts	2	No. of starts	15	33	67
		% retention	64	61	76
		% pass rate	100	95	86
First diploma performing arts	2	No. of starts	15	20	19
		% retention	73	61	63
		% pass rate	64	91	75
GCE A-level art and design	3	No. of starts	21	77	42
		% retention	75	83	93*
		% pass rate	87	94	95
National diploma design	3	No. of starts	64	62	76
		% retention	77	74	80
		% pass rate	96	89	88
Diploma in foundation studies art and design	3	No. of starts	47	47	47
		% retention	74	91	77
		% pass rate	83	88	100

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
National diploma in performing arts	3	No. of starts	30	36	37
		% retention	73	72	59
		% pass rate	95	88	87

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

** retention rates for GEC A level 2002 are in-year

Quality of education and training

144. Most teaching is good. Schemes of work and lesson plans are particularly well designed. Teachers give students clear briefs that create stimulating lessons. They provide very effective guidance to individual students and encourage them to self-evaluate their own work continually. Students are encouraged to work both individually and in groups with minimum supervision. In a GCE A-level lesson, students worked with a range of media including collage, acrylics and pastels. The teacher gave good practical advice on the application of paints and the spatial qualities of drips to individual students, before questioning the whole group about balance and composition. In the performing arts, teachers use their knowledge and expertise well. They give students good opportunities to develop and test their performance skills in front of an audience. Teachers of design are keen to combine new and traditional technologies. In a national diploma lesson, the teacher demonstrated how to manipulate a black and white portrait into a three-dimensional image. The students then developed their own images using photographs from a previous assignment.

145. In a few lessons, teachers do not properly plan what they want students to do. For example, in a music technology lesson, students playing pianos and guitars at the same time disrupted each other. Poor accommodation and equipment occasionally affect students' progress. A printmaking workshop was too small for the range of activities students were expected to complete.

146. Teachers are well qualified and have appropriate professional and industrial expertise. There are few full-time teachers in the performing arts. Most accommodation, including the large number of community-based venues, is good. Drama and dance studios are well designed and equipped to provide a good environment for rehearsal and performance. The facilities for photography, ceramics, wood and metal are excellent. Computer hardware and software are good at the main centres and the majority of community-based venues. The library facilities are comprehensive and include a specialist art library. Outside of lessons, however, students have limited access to studios, and are not able to use workshops. The accommodation and equipment for music are of a poor standard.

147. Comprehensive policies for assessment are implemented effectively in art and design. Clear assessment criteria are shared with students at the start of their course. Course teams discuss students' progress and achievement at regular team meetings. Teachers give students excellent oral feedback on their work. In the best examples, written feedback is comprehensive, with constructive comments on how students can further improve their work. Parents are regularly invited to the college to discuss the progress of students aged 16 to 18. Internal verification is not always carried out satisfactorily in performing arts.

148. The college offers a broad range of vocational and general education courses. They meet the needs of adults and students aged 16 to 18, including disaffected young people. Students can progress from foundation to advanced level courses in art and design. There is a bespoke course for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Links with local schools are very good. Students have good opportunities to visit galleries and art shows. For example, course tutors have strong links with the new Millennium Galleries; students on the diploma in foundation studies take part in an annual trip to Paris; and students on GCE A levels and national diplomas visit London. Some students have difficulty in studying additional subjects, because of the problems in travelling to the sites where they are offered.

149. Tutorial support in the visual arts is well structured. Students value the support and encouragement that they receive from their tutors on both course-related and personal issues. Tutorials in performing arts are less effective, partly because of a shortage of full-time teachers. Prospective students are not always made sufficiently aware of the work they will undertake on their course.

Leadership and management

150. Management of the area is satisfactory. Section leaders play a key role in monitoring the quality of provision and set course targets for improvement in attendance, retention and pass rates. Part-time teachers, particularly in local community-based venues, are kept well informed. However, communication between course teams is poor. Course teams meet regularly, but course team meetings have too broad an agenda and do not take sufficient account of students' views. The college's quality assurance procedures are followed, but not enough attention is given to sharing good practice in teaching or in improving the quality of the provision. There are no systematic arrangements for identifying staff development needs.

Psychology, sociology, politics, law

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

Strengths

- high pass rates on most course in 2002
- good assessment and feedback on assignments in psychology and sociology and on adult programmes
- flexible provision of courses and career pathways
- good guidance and support for students on pre-access to HE courses
- effective curriculum management.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on GCE AS and access to HE courses
- insufficiently demanding teaching in many lessons
- low attendance rates
- lack of enrichment activities
- inadequate academic support for students aged 16 to 18.

Scope of provision

151. Courses in law, psychology, sociology and politics are offered at the college's main centres and several community-based venues. At the time of the inspection, there were about 1300 students. Approximately two-thirds were aged 16 to 18. Over 600 students were on GCE AS and A-level courses and 250 adults were on humanities and social science access to HE and pre-access courses. About 200 students were studying on evening classes in law, psychology or sociology.

Achievement and standards

152. Most courses had high pass rates in 2002. Pass rates for GCE AS sociology and psychology are well above national averages, but the pass rate for GCE AS law is low. Recent pass rates for one-year GCE A-level psychology and sociology and two-year GCE A-level law and psychology are high. The pass rate on the two-year access to HE course has improved significantly over three years and is now above the national average, but the pass rate for the one-year access to HE course has fallen over the same period and is now well below the national average. Retention rates are poor on many courses. At GCSE, the rates

declined sharply in both social sciences between 2001 and 2002. They have also declined on GCE AS courses, the one-year GCE A-level psychology course, and on both access courses.

153. Most students produce work of a satisfactory standard. Adults on access to HE courses generally fulfil their potential. For example, in 2001, 93% of those who completed the courses progressed to HE. Many students develop a good understanding of their subjects and use their new knowledge with confidence. However, few students fully develop their skills of investigation, analysis and evaluation. Their oral and presentation skills are frequently poor. Answers to questions posed by teachers are often very brief. Students work with interest, but the more able students do not stretch themselves sufficiently. Student attendance at some lessons is poor. During the inspection, the attendance rate was low, at 62%.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GCSE psychology 1 year	2	No. of starts	105	72	95
		% retention	64	78	64
		% pass rate	61	64	49
GCE A-level law 2 years	3	No. of starts	98	82	30
		% retention	73	55	100*
		% pass rate	63	76	97
GCE A-level psychology 2 years	3	No. of starts	185	177	104
		% retention	52	56	91*
		% pass rate	91	79	94
GCE A-level sociology 2 years	3	No. of starts	99	96	58
		% retention	77	56	90*
		% pass rate	92	76	90
Access to HE humanities/social sciences 1 year	3	No. of starts	95	121	100
		% retention	74	72	67
		% pass rate	80	62	69

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
Access to HE humanities/social sciences 2 years	3	No. of starts	20	64	55
		% retention	80	48	47
		% pass rate	31	65	83

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

*retention rates for GCE A level are in-year

Quality of education and training

154. Most teaching is satisfactory, and some is good. Schemes of work for access courses and the social sciences are well structured. In psychology, teachers use detailed weekly teaching plans. In the best lessons, teachers encourage students to participate, make systematic checks on their understanding and develop their learning through a mix of whole class, individual and group activities. In a GCE A-level sociology lesson, students first discussed youth sub-cultures in small groups, and then moved on to discuss their understanding of crime and deviance as a whole class. Finally, the teacher summarised the key points of the discussion on the whiteboard. In a few lessons, teachers provide interesting learning resources to help students develop their research skills as well as understanding. In a law lesson, GCE AS students compared the background, age, gender and ethnicity of judges using articles given to them by their teacher. They then worked in small groups to summarise the characteristics of judges and their role within the judiciary system.

155. In many lessons, however, teachers have not identified in advance the intended learning outcomes. Poor questioning techniques fail to adequately check students' understanding or involve all students. Small group work often fails to spark discussion. In some lessons, teachers talk for too long and do not give enough attention to developing their students' oral skills. Instead, students' responses are often very brief, while the more able students are not stretched sufficiently. Few teachers use ICT in lessons. References to extended reading and materials on the intranet are rare. In some lessons, photocopied handout materials are used to replace rather than supplement textbooks.

156. Teachers are well qualified and most are suitably experienced. Accommodation on the main sites is generally satisfactory, although some rooms are too small for the size of the class or type of lesson and some whiteboards are difficult to read. Some classrooms feature interesting examples of students' work.

157. Students' progress is regularly monitored through assessment. Teachers' use of initial assessment data and assessment of students' work are not always effective and feedback on students' work is not always sufficiently detailed or helpful. On access courses, and in psychology and sociology, teachers provide detailed comments to help students

improve the quality of their work. However, in subjects such as law and politics, teachers' comments are too brief to be useful.

158. The courses offered by the college meet the needs of a diverse range of students well.

159. Many part-time courses can be studied both during the day and in the evening. Of the 107 courses offered, 59 are based on two of the college's main centres and the remainder are spread evenly across the other three centres and community-based venues. GCE AS and A-level courses are offered at all five main centres and GCSE courses at two. Adults can take one-year and two-year access to HE and 'Freshstart' courses at four centres. All the courses provide good opportunities for progression to further study or employment. There are few opportunities for students to take part in enrichment activities. Teachers do not make sufficient use of the resources of Sheffield and the surrounding area to broaden the curriculum.

160. Adults on pre-access and access to HE courses are well supported by their tutors. However, subject-related support for students aged 16 to 18 is inadequate. When available, students find teachers helpful and supportive. Students have difficulty making contact with their teachers who either teach on more than one site or who are part time. Good advice is provided in course-specific student handbooks.

Leadership and management

161. Management of the area is good. Documentation is carefully completed. Teachers work well together in course teams. Schemes of work in the social sciences and for access programmes are detailed. Termly reviews are used effectively to monitor and evaluate curriculum development and teaching. Performance data are analysed comprehensively. The self-assessment report analysed retention and pass rates well. However, it was not sufficiently self-critical about the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers are not always able to attend subject-specific meetings.

Modern foreign languages

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

Strengths

- high pass rates
- well-planned and effective teaching
- high standard of students' work
- extensive range of languages in the college and at community-based venue
- effective curriculum management
- effective assessment practice for students aged 16 to 18.

Weaknesses

- low attendance rates on part-time courses for adults
- low retention rates on OCN courses at levels 1 and 2
- insufficient sharing of good practice in teaching
- some unsatisfactory resources.

Scope of provision

162. The college offers an extensive range of languages including French, German, Spanish, Italian, English as a foreign language (EFL), Urdu, Arabic, Chinese, Russian, Portuguese, Greek and Turkish. Most full-time students study GCSE, GCE AS and A levels at the main centres. Most part-time students study OCN courses at levels 1 and 2. At the time of the inspection, there were nearly 2,400 students enrolled on full-time or part-time courses in modern foreign languages. Of these, 1,000 were adults enrolled on OCN courses. Some 85% of students were aged 19 or over.

Achievement and standards

163. Pass rates are high on most courses. Students aged 16 to 18 on GCE AS and A-level courses are particularly successful, with 100% pass rates in GCE AS Urdu, French, Russian and Italian and GCE A-level Spanish and Urdu in 2002. Pass rates for adults on OCN courses are also high, with 97% of students achieving the qualification in 2002. However, pass rates on courses for adults at GCSE and GCE AS are low. Many adults who study GCE AS and A levels do not sit the examinations. The proportion of adults on GCE AS and A-level and OCN courses at levels 3 and 4 who complete their courses is high, but it is low on

OCN courses at levels 1 and 2 and GCSE. Retention rates for students aged 16 to 18 are unsatisfactory on GCE AS courses, but good on GCE A-level courses. Enrolments on to GCE AS languages courses have increased over the last two years, but the proportion of students who progress to GCE A level is low.

164. Students are enthusiastic and most produce work of a high standard. They use the language they are learning with confidence to discuss points of grammar. The written work of adults at level 3 is particularly good. Many adults progress from foundation to advanced level courses. The attendance rates of adult students are low.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
OCN levels 1 and 2	1	No. of starts	961	970	1,080
		% retention	67	71	66
		% pass rate	91	88	97
OCN levels 3 and 4	2	No. of starts	257	221	228
		% retention	85	81	82
		% pass rate	89	76	97
GCSE Spanish	2	No. of starts	52	63	56
		% retention	79	81	77
		% pass rate	88	92	81
GCE A-level German	3	No. of starts	36	22	14
		% retention	66	76	100*
		% pass rate	91	69	93
GCE A-level Spanish	3	No. of starts	28	18	10
		% retention	82	94	89*
		% pass rate	65	81	100

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GCE A-level French	3	No. of starts	33	30	23
		% retention	70	70	96*
		% pass rate	70	95	91

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

*retention rates for GCE A level 2002 are in-year

Quality of education and training

165. The majority of teaching is good, but some is unsatisfactory. Teachers plan their lessons carefully and use a wide range of appropriate activities and resources. They use the language they are teaching whenever possible and encourage students to do the same. For example, in a GCE AS Spanish lesson, students conversed in pairs to help each other and build up their confidence before the teacher assessed their progress. The students made good use of materials such as photographs of people and places brought from Spain in their conversations. Teachers encourage their students to participate in lessons. Through good relationships with their teachers, students feel at ease even when questioned. In a Chinese beginner's lesson, the native speaker used authentic resources and prompt sheets to ensure that all the students were actively involved throughout the lesson. The students felt confident to perform with mime a Chinese nursery rhyme and even asked if they could repeat the exercise.

166. In a few lessons teaching is dull, with the emphasis on the completion of written tasks rather than the development of linguistic skills. In these lessons, there is little opportunity for students to work together. Teachers make little use of ICT or video recordings.

167. Teachers are well qualified. Many have good contacts with awarding bodies, either as examiners or through their attendance at updating sessions. Very good use is made of native speakers. The standard of accommodation and equipment varies considerably from well-decorated and well-equipped classrooms to those that are poorly ventilated and maintained and minimally equipped. Most of the books and other materials available in the learning centres are not relevant to the coursework requirements of GCE AS and A-level study.

168. Assessment practice is effective for students aged 16 to 18. The common marking scheme for GCE AS and A-level courses is well used to ensure that students know the standard of their work and to set targets for improvement. Students receive good feedback on their oral skills as well as clear written comments on their marked work. Those on other courses are not always as well informed about their progress. Few adults are set short-term goals and individual learning plans are not used.

169. The college's extensive range of languages gives students, some of whom travel from outside Sheffield, opportunities to study combinations of languages not available at other colleges. Adult students are able to progress from beginners' courses to GCE A level. Many languages can be studied in community-based venues as well at the college's main sites. There are few curriculum enrichment opportunities, although there are individual overseas trips and exchanges. Language courses are not provided for employers.

170. Teachers support individual students well. Part-time students are encouraged to pursue further studies and many do. Tutorials for full-time students are satisfactory. A common programme involves presentations by both tutors and student services staff, but students are often reluctant to participate.

Leadership and management

171. Modern languages provision is effectively managed. Communication is good. Part-time teachers are kept well informed through a modern languages web site that encourages the sharing of resources and includes useful tips on good teaching practice. The self-assessment report was accurate. Centrally held data are used effectively to set targets for improvement. Retention officers have recently been appointed to help the implementation of the area's retention action plan. Managers carefully monitor the teaching of part-time teachers and students' progress on OCN courses. However, there are no systematic arrangements for identifying and sharing good practice in teaching on other courses.

English

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

Strengths

- high pass rates
- much very good teaching
- successful GCSE English online programme
- wide range of courses
- effective assessment practice.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on some courses for adults
- low retention rates in GCE AS communication studies and GCSE English literature
- low attendance rates on some courses.

Scope of provision

172. The college provides a wide range of full-time and part-time English and communication courses. GCE A-levels are offered in English language, English language and literature, English literature, and communication studies. English and English literature are offered at GCSE, together with OCN awards in English studies. At the time of the inspection, there were 2,437 students enrolled on English or communication studies courses. Of the 1,773 full-time students, 86% were aged 16 to 18. Nearly 70% of part-time students were aged 19 or over. Some 70 students were enrolled on the GCSE English online programme.

Achievement and standards

173. Pass rates are high on almost all courses. In 2002, the pass rate of 60% in GCSE English was significantly above the national average, and the pass rate on the GCSE English online programme was 100%. Students on GCE A-level English language and English literature courses achieve better than expected on the basis of their GCSE results. Retention rates on most courses are at, or above, national averages. However, some retention rates for adult students are low, and the retention rates on GCE AS communication studies and GCSE English literature were low in 2002. There is a good rate of progression from advanced level courses to HE.

174. Students' written work is generally well presented and organised. They enjoy their lessons, and many are keen to take part in discussions in their lessons. They work well together in pairs and small groups, and show respect for the views of others. Students are usually punctual, but attendance is low on some courses.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GCSE English language	2	No. of starts	751	709	828
		% retention	74	75	71
		% pass rate	56	56	60
GCSE English literature	2	No. of starts	31	28	26
		% retention	71	75	58
		% pass rate	55	95	60
GCE A-level English language (2 year)	3	No. of starts	109	127	117
		% retention	73	81	95
		% pass rate	90	82	97*
GCE A-level English language and literature (1 year)	3	No. of starts	36	31	19
		% retention	75	77	89*
		% pass rate	78	63	82
GCE A-level English language and literature (2 year)	3	No. of starts	179	153	74
		% retention	69	71	97*
		% pass rate	89	92	99
GCE A-level English literature (2 year)	3	No. of starts	58	68	46
		% retention	69	81	93*
		% pass rate	90	93	100

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

*retention rates for GCE A level 2002 are in-year

Quality of education and training

175. Most teaching is very good or outstanding. Lessons are well prepared, and teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic. They know their students well, and create a friendly and encouraging atmosphere in their lessons. In many lessons, there is an effective mixture of whole class, group and individual activities. Teachers have high expectations of their students, but at the same time are careful to structure tasks so that the students can concentrate their efforts and learn quickly and systematically. For example, in a GCE AS English language and literature lesson, students studied the poetry of Simon Armitage. They worked in small groups to complete a sheet containing a list of various literary and linguistic terms by identifying examples from the poems and describing their effect. In this way, they were able to develop and consolidate their understanding of the poetry, the terms, and ways to approach and analyse other poetry. Teachers are making increasing use of ICT in English lessons. The materials they have produced to support students studying the online GCSE English programme are of excellent quality. Students are encouraged to access English-related web sites.

176. In a few lessons, teachers fail to involve the more reticent students in whole class discussion. Some lesson plans do not identify the intended learning outcomes.

177. Teachers are well qualified, and many are examiners. All teachers have attended information learning technology (ILT) training. Learning centres at all the main centres have adequate collections of books, video and audio-tapes for English language and literature, and good collections of modern fiction to encourage wider reading. Students have good access to relevant web sites through the college's web site. Teaching rooms are suitably equipped and furnished.

178. Assessment is carried out well and helps students to make good progress. Teachers mark students' written work accurately and return it promptly. They make useful suggestions on how the work can be improved. Course handbooks include comprehensive information on assessment requirements. All courses require students to comment on each assignment and to evaluate their own performance. Minimum grades based on GCSE results are used as targets to monitor the progress of full-time GCE AS and A-level students. Arrangements for internal moderation or verification are thorough and effective.

179. The range of English and communication courses meet the needs of individual students well. Apart from GCSE, GCE AS and A levels, students can take courses in English studies accredited by OCN. English language and literature are offered as options within the social studies and humanities access to HE programmes. Most courses are offered at the college's main centres, and may be studied full time or part time. However, GCSE English and GCSE English literature are also offered at various community-based venues. A GCSE English on-line programme, catering in particular for those in the local area and beyond who are unable to attend college, was introduced successfully in 2001/02.

180. Tutorial support for students on full-time and substantive part-time programmes is good. Students value highly the personal support they receive from their personal tutors and teachers. At least two subject reviews are held each year for full-time students. Parents are kept well informed about the progress of students aged 16 to 18.

Leadership and management

181. Management of the English provision is very good. Course review and self-assessment is thorough and accurate. Course teams work well together and meet regularly. Teachers discuss good practices in teaching and share good quality learning materials. Staff development is well managed, and teachers regularly attend in-house or external training courses and events. Although individual training needs are effectively identified and met, many teachers have not been appraised within the last three years.

Literacy and numeracy

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

Strengths

- innovative and effective approaches to engage new students
- good support for students on the adult literacy and numeracy programme
- good progress by some adults in developing their literacy and numeracy skills.

Weaknesses

- too many poorly planned and unstimulating lessons
- ineffective management of literacy and numeracy across the college
- very low pass rates in key skills at level 1
- inadequate individual learning plans
- lack of differentiation in the teaching of literacy and numeracy for vocational students
- some unsuitable accommodation and poor access to resources.

Scope of provision

182. Literacy and numeracy provision includes a large part-time adult programme and the full-time Connections programme for students aged 16 to 18 at entry level or level 1. There are also literacy, numeracy and key skills classes for full-time students on vocational courses. At the time of the inspection, the adult basic skills programme had enrolled over 2,000 part-time students. There were about 500 full-time students aged 16 to 18 on the Connections programme. Nearly 2,500 students on general education and vocational courses were receiving learning support during lessons from either their own teachers or basic skills teachers to help them achieve their primary learning goal or a key skills qualification.

Achievement and standards

183. Pass rates for OCN credits are satisfactory. Pass rates for the Connections programme improved to 74% in 2002, but retention rates were below that expected at 72%. Pass rates for key skills level 1 application of number and communications are very low. Around 300 students on vocational courses take basic skills qualifications as an alternative to key skills. They achieve better results. Poor diagnostic work, unclear learning targets and a lack of recorded assessment in individual learning plans means that achievements on other than externally accredited courses are either unsatisfactory or not clearly recorded.

184. The majority of students produce work of a satisfactory standard. Some adults make good progress by completing their work outside timetabled lessons. More than half the students on the Connections programme progress to other vocational or academic courses in the college each year. Students' attendance rates are often poor. The attendance rate at lessons was very low, at 48%.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
OCN literacy (1 year)	X	No. of starts	4,916	3,803	2,299
		% retention	65	77	77
		% pass rate	84	68	73
OCN numeracy (1 year)	X	No. of starts	1,573	1,734	1,807
		% retention	71	76	77
		% pass rate	74	79	69
Key skills application of number	1	No. of starts	***	849	1,069
		% retention	***	88	79
		% pass rate	***	2	2
Key skills communications	1	No. of starts	***	**	1,023
		% retention	***	**	78
		% pass rate	***	**	7

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

** data unreliable

*** course did not run

Quality of education and training

185. Much teaching is poorly planned with little reference to intended learning outcomes for groups or individuals. In four lessons there was no lesson plan available, in two more the plan was the same for every lesson for the year and, in some other lessons, plans were too brief to be of practical use. There are insufficient changes of activity in long teaching sessions. Teachers often fail to match teaching methods to students' learning styles. Many numeracy lessons are based on the use of paper-based workbooks. The internally produced

workbooks are good, but are overused in these lessons. In some lessons, the only activity was to work through the workbooks, in some cases for up to two and a half hours. In literacy and numeracy lessons in vocational areas, some students were not sufficiently challenged by the work set whilst others did not make progress because of the teaching method or lack of support. Lessons in vocational areas are often taught using non-vocational materials. In some Connections lessons, insufficient planning, support or attention to the learning needs of individuals resulted in some students gaining little from the lesson. Teachers rarely use ICT to help students' learning. Some students' work is poorly presented and is often marked without detailed or useful feedback.

186. In some lessons with adult students, teachers varied the activities appropriately, and gave good individual support. The students then worked industriously through the work set for them to do. There is some good group teaching on Connections courses. In one lesson, a stimulating group discussion was followed by written work from two handouts set at different levels.

187. Most teachers who teach on the adult programme are appropriately qualified and have completed recent training in the literacy and numeracy core curriculum. However, teachers on the Connections programme and those who teach literacy and numeracy in vocational areas have not been trained in the teaching of basic skills. There are some good paper-based resources to help students in home-based study. The accommodation used for literacy and numeracy is often unsuitable. Very few classrooms contain computers and, in some, it is not easy for students to get hold of learning materials.

188. It is too early to evaluate the effectiveness of the newly introduced individual learning plan that has been mapped to the national standards for literacy and numeracy. Although some learning plans are well completed, most are not used effectively. The results of diagnostic assessment are not recorded in these learning plans. Most learning plans record the activity rather than the learning outcome and do not contain clear long-term or short-term targets. Individual learning plans are not used in lessons for students on vocational courses. Some teachers do not provide students with written feedback on their marked work.

189. The college offers adult literacy and numeracy courses at over 50 locations in and around Sheffield. The Connections programme is available at all of the college's main centres and in three community-based venues. Information on courses is widely available. Strategies to recruit students include door-to-door campaigns by staff trained in basic skills awareness, a family literacy programme and teachers working in primary schools with the parents of young children. Summer courses are run at local youth clubs to engage young people and recruit them on to the Connections courses.

190. Initial assessment is effective. It ensures that students on the adult basic skills programme work towards the appropriate level of OCN literacy and numeracy accreditation. Students on the adult programme receive good personal and academic support from their teachers. Their progress towards OCN credits is carefully recorded. Support for students on the Connections programme is less effective. For example, two students with dyslexia gained little from a lesson because of the absence of specialist support.

Leadership and management

191. Management of literacy and numeracy is unsatisfactory. The self-assessment report did not identify weaknesses in teaching and individual learning plans. There is no cross-college training programme for teachers of basic skills. No lesson observations have been undertaken by basic skills specialists. There have been no audits of individual learning plans. Teachers who teach literacy and numeracy either on the Connections programme or on vocational courses are not given enough guidance by curriculum managers trained in basic skills. However, recruitment targets for the adult programme and Connections courses are consistently met. Centrally held data are used to set and monitor targets for retention and pass rates.

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

Level	16–18	19+
1	18	32
2	36	23
3	26	16
4/5	1	3
Other	19	26
Total	100	100

Source: provided by the college in 2002

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age

Curriculum area	16–18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments
Science and Mathematics	6,917	8,846	25
Land-based provision	13	52	0
Construction	578	1,010	3
Engineering, technology and manufacture	494	891	2
Business administration, management and professional	1,685	3,118	8
Hotel and catering	1,675	1,605	5
Health, social care and public services	2,243	3,171	9
Visual and performing arts and media	1,201	2,157	5
Humanities	11,930	5,411	28
Basic education	3,087	5,910	15
Total	29,823	32,171	100

Source: provided by the college in 2002

Table 3: Retention and achievement

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16–18			19+		
		1999	2000	2001	1999	2000	2001
1	Starters excluding transfers	1,916	2,007	1,907	4,356	5,954	4,640
	Retention rate	72	77	77	72	70	69
	National average	77	78	79	74	77	80
	Pass rate	72	64	72	69	73	72
	National average	57	63	65	58	66	69
2	Starters excluding transfers	3,470	3,410	3,241	4,743	5,995	4,688
	Retention rate	73	76	76	73	78	76
	National average	73	74	74	75	77	78
	Pass rate	79	74	81	75	79	77
	National average	63	67	67	62	65	65
3	Starters excluding transfers	4,196	3,867	5,797	2,930	3,027	2,994
	Retention rate	76	78	79	76	79	73
	National average	75	75	74	76	78	77
	Pass rate	81	80	83	66	69	70
	National average	66	68	69	61	64	66
4/5	Starters excluding transfers	38	17	17	498	418	318
	Retention rate	79	100	94	70	87	80
	National average	78	77	*	83	84	83
	Pass rate	64	67	38	55	59	49
	National average	57	68	*	50	51	48

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 1998/99 to 2000/01: Retention and Achievement Rates in Further Education Colleges in England, Learning and Skills Council, September 2002.*
 2. *College rates for 1997/8–1998/9: Benchmarking Data 1997/98 to 1999/2000: Retention and Achievement Rates, produced by the Further Education Funding Council, September 2000.*
 3. *College rates for 1998/99 to 2000/01: college ISR.*
- * data unavailable*

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

Courses	Teaching judged to be:			No of sessions observed
	Good or better %	Satisfactory %	Less than satisfactory %	
Level 3 (advanced)	62	32	6	164
Level 2 (intermediate)	59	31	10	104
Level 1 (foundation)	52	34	14	44
Other sessions	47	44	9	32
Totals	59	33	8	344

