



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



OFFICE FOR STANDARDS
IN EDUCATION

SUFFOLK COLLEGE

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SUFFOLK COLLEGE INSPECTION REPORT

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Reporting inspector: David Knighton HMI

Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

Telephone: 020 7421 6800

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Part A: Summary

Information about the College

Suffolk College is a large college in Ipswich. Approximately half of its provision is further education (FE), with courses in all vocational areas except agriculture; enrolments are highest in humanities, health & community care and business. The majority of its other work is funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England or the Department of Health. The college collaborates with the local education authority in provision of adult/community education. It is a partner in two school-centred initial teacher-training schemes and has a substantial work-based learning programme. Only further education and work-based learning were inspected.

The college enrolls approximately 16,000 students annually. Of these, about a quarter are on full-time courses, a third on part-time vocational courses, and just over 40 per cent on part-time leisure and recreational courses. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is 6 per cent. Forty-three per cent of students are male and 57 per cent are female.

In its mission statement the college “aims to be widely respected for the quality of its courses, the opportunities provided for students and the skills of its staff”. It aims to offer “excellence through diversity”, to encourage the pursuit of lifelong learning, and to maximise achievement and progression, making effective use of modern technology in both teaching and learning. It aims to provide students with relevant qualifications and skills for employment whilst enabling staff to contribute to the success of the college.

How Effective is the College?

The quality of teaching and the standards of students' achievement are good or better in five out of the 13 curriculum areas inspected. The majority of students are well supported academically and personally. Governors and senior managers provide the college with clear strategic direction. However, the management of, and provision in, a few curriculum areas are unsatisfactory. The college's key strengths and the areas that should be improved are listed below.

Key strengths

- good overall pass rates
- effective teaching and learning in many curriculum areas
- a wide range of courses and programmes which meet the diverse needs of the local area
- good quality academic tutorials and personal support for students
- recent initiatives to improve the college's financial position and its retention rates.

What should be improved

- the unsatisfactory teaching in some curriculum areas
- inadequate IT resources
- insufficient additional learning support for some students
- insufficient sharing of good practice between curriculum areas
- unsatisfactory management and quality assurance in a few curriculum areas.

Summary

Quality of Provision in Individual 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 (grade 2), satisfactory (grade 3), unsatisfactory (grade 4), and very weak (grade 5).

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Science and Mathematics	Satisfactory Pass rates are good in science, but retention rates are low on general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) courses. Practical lessons are well taught. Some aspects of planning are unsatisfactory
Information Technology	Good Pass rates are generally high and students have well-developed practical skills. Lessons are well planned and taught. Retention rates are low on most courses.
Construction	Satisfactory Pass rates are high on college-based programmes and teaching is good. Retention rates have declined on many programmes. Work-based training is unsatisfactory.
Engineering	Unsatisfactory Retention and pass rates are unsatisfactory on modern apprenticeship programmes and on some level 2 and 3 electrical and mechanical engineering courses. Work is satisfactory in motor vehicle courses. Management of work-based learning is unsatisfactory.
Business and Professional Studies	Good There are good pass rates on many courses. Teaching and learning are effective. The public services courses are excellent. Management of general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) programmes is unsatisfactory. Work-based learning is well organised and effective.
Hospitality and Catering	Outstanding Pass rates are high and retention rates are good. Teaching is very good in both theory and practical lessons. Students benefit from a wide range of enrichment activities, productive links with industry and very good specialist facilities.
Leisure and Tourism	Satisfactory Pass rates are good on some full- and part-time courses. Teaching is generally satisfactory. Support for students is good. Retention and attendance rates are unsatisfactory.
Health, Social Studies and Childcare	Unsatisfactory Pass rates are low on level 3 courses in childhood studies and nursery nursing. They are good on level 2 programmes. Retention rates have declined on most courses this year. Teaching is good in GCE A-level psychology. Otherwise, much teaching is unsatisfactory.
Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy	Good Pass rates on most courses are high. Teaching of theory and practical skills is effective. Work-based training is good.

Summary

Visual and Performing Arts, Media Studies	Good The standard of students' work is generally high. Retention rates are low on a few courses. Much of the teaching is good. There is a wide range of specialist options for advanced level students.
English and Access to Higher Education	Satisfactory Work of a high standard is produced on access to higher education courses, and students develop appropriate independent study and research skills. In English there is some poor teaching and low pass rates.
Modern Foreign Languages	Satisfactory Most students make good progress in developing their language skills. The proportion of students who complete their GCE A level and general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) courses is low.
Basic Skills	Satisfactory Most students make adequate progress. Teaching is satisfactory overall, and effective use is made of vocational materials to aid learning. Recording of students' progress is inadequate.

How Well is the College Led and Managed?

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Governors provide effective oversight of the strategic direction of the college. College finances are tightly managed. A strategy to overcome the college's financial deficit has been implemented effectively. Actions to improve retention rates have begun to have an effect. The way the college is organised provides a clear identity for further education and work-based training. However, some aspects of provision are not always well-managed and there is insufficient sharing of good practice. In some curriculum areas, self-assessment and other quality assurance procedures are having little effect on improving the quality of provision.

How Well are Students and Trainees Guided and Supported?

Induction arrangements are well planned and allow students to settle quickly into their programmes of study. Careers guidance is responsive to the needs of students. There is a comprehensive range of effective support services. Adult learners who are returning to study benefit particularly well from these services. Students with additional learning needs receive specialist assistance, but the co-ordination and monitoring of learning support is inadequate.

Students' Views of the College

Students' views about the college were taken into account and their main comments are presented below. Generally, students were positive about the teaching staff and the student-friendly environment of the main college site.

What students like about the college

- the friendly environment
- the good tutorial support and access to additional support
- flexible timetabling that enables them to match modes and times of attendance to their personal/work commitments.

Summary

What they feel could be improved

- the fabric of the building, cramped and drab classrooms
- communication, publicity and marketing
- access to good IT facilities
- key skills teaching.

Other Information

The college has two months to prepare an action plan in response to the report. It must show what action the college will take in response to issues raised in the report. The Governors must agree the plan and send copies of it to the Learning and Skills Council and the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED).

The College as a Whole

Part B: The College as a Whole

Achievement and Standards

How well do learners achieve?

1 Over the three years from 1998 to 2000, there was an overall decline in the proportion of students at Suffolk College completing their courses. On level 1 and level 2 courses, after a drop in 1999, the retention rates for students aged 16–18 showed some improvement in 2000 to a figure close to the average for general further education and tertiary colleges. After previously high retention rates, the proportion of level 3 students of all ages completing their courses fell markedly in 2000. Initial figures indicate that retention rates on full-time courses have increased by several percentage points in the current academic year.

2 The proportion of those students who, on completing their courses, successfully achieve the qualification has remained consistently above average from 1997 to 2000. In 2000, pass rates on different levels of qualifications and for both students aged 16–18 and adult students were at or above the upper quartile figures for colleges of this type. With only a few exceptions, this pattern of success has been maintained across the different vocational areas in the college.

3 Overall, students aged 16–18 enter the college with lower than average attainments in the general certificate of secondary education (GCSE). Their above-average success in achieving vocational qualifications therefore indicates good progress during their time in the college.

4 Whilst GCE A-level pass rates have increased over the last few years, they remain below national averages. For the relatively small number of students on GCE A-level programmes, value-added analysis shows that, since 1997, overall performance has been below what would be expected on

the basis of students' prior attainments. Pass rates on advanced GNVQ programmes have been above national averages, but with relatively low proportions of higher grades. The pass rates on National Diploma courses have been consistently above national averages in recent years.

5 At level 2, the combined pass rate for intermediate GNVQ and First Diploma programmes has remained close to the national average for further education colleges in the last two years. GCSE pass rates at grades A–C* have also been similar to national averages for FE colleges.

6 Standards of students' work observed in the classroom during the course of the inspection were generally good. In 47 per cent of lessons, attainment was judged to be better than average and in 17 per cent it was very good or outstanding. It was less than satisfactory in 14 per cent. The knowledge and understanding shown by most students are satisfactory or good. Evaluative and analytical skills are underdeveloped on a few level 3 courses. Students develop appropriate practical skills in most vocational areas. Projects and extended assignments are tackled effectively. Portfolios of work are generally well-organised and presented.

7 In work-based training, pass rates are good in business, office technology and hairdressing. In contrast, progress in achieving modern apprenticeships has been very slow in construction and engineering, and many modern apprentices have withdrawn from engineering programmes without gaining a qualification.

8 Where key skills have been made an integral part of programmes of study, students are achieving at suitable levels. However, when this is not the case, many students are unclear about the relevance of key skills to their main programmes, attendance at key skills lessons is poor, and the work produced by students is not always at an appropriate level. Results in key skills

The College as a Whole

examinations taken recently have been satisfactory overall.

9 There is some variability in the extent to which personal and learning skills are being developed amongst younger students, but the overall picture is satisfactory. Adult learners are generally confident in expressing their views and discussing their work. Students in some areas, such as hospitality and catering and visual and performing arts, work well together as teams.

Attendance in lessons observed

	Average number of students	Average attendance
Suffolk College	10	77.4%
National average for 1999/2000	10.3	76.0%

Source: National average: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1999/2000*: Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) Chief Inspector's Annual Report.

The College as a Whole

Quality of education and training

Quality of teaching observed during inspection

Courses	Teaching which was judged to be:			Sessions observed No.
	Good or better %	Satisfactory %	Less than satisfactory %	
Level 3 (advanced)	57%	26%	17%	133
Level 2 (intermediate)	53%	30%	17%	70
Level 1 (foundation)	56%	32%	12%	41
Other sessions	64%	27%	9%	11
Total	56%	28%	16%	255

Note: More information on the grades awarded by inspectors to teaching, learning and attainment can be found in Part D: College Data

How effective are teaching, training and learning?

10 The majority of teaching in the college is good or better and in 27 per cent of lessons observed it was very good or outstanding. However, as the table illustrates, there is also a significant proportion of unsatisfactory teaching.

11 In most curriculum areas, the teaching meets the needs of the majority of learners and leads to the acquisition of relevant skills and knowledge. Assessment is well managed. Marking is fair and teachers' comments help students to improve their work and to develop their understanding of the subject.

12 In effective lessons, the teachers are appropriately knowledgeable about their subjects and are able to maintain the interest and enthusiasm of their students. They demonstrate a high level of technical skills in areas such as catering and creative arts.

13 Students' practical skills are developed effectively in all subjects. Practical lessons are well planned and

effectively managed. Students are encouraged to adopt professional practices, and they achieve high standards of practical work in some areas. However, there is insufficient integration of modern apprentices' learning in the college with their experience at work.

14 Most of the unsatisfactory teaching is a result of poor planning. Schemes of work are underdeveloped and a small proportion of lessons have no clear objectives. Much of the teaching on GCE A-level courses is unimaginative and fails to motivate students.

15 All students are initially assessed to diagnose their ability in the key skills of information technology, communications and application of number. This assessment enables staff to identify which students need additional support. However, neither this assessment nor that which assesses students' basic skills is used effectively to devise individual learning plans for students. On some courses, students follow the same learning programme in key skills. As a result, some students are insufficiently challenged by the work they are doing and others are struggling to make progress.

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Insufficient attention has been given to developing effective methods of teaching key skills in most curriculum areas.

16 Effective learning takes place on the majority of programmes. Students generally apply themselves well to what they are doing, particularly in practical lessons, where they make good progress. However, in some theory lessons students do not make satisfactory progress because the objectives are not made sufficiently clear or the lessons are insufficiently challenging.

17 There are good working relationships between staff and students and amongst students. Students speak positively about the quality of the teaching they receive.

How are achievement and learning affected by resources?

18 The teaching staff in most curriculum areas are well qualified and many have relevant occupational experience. Staff in areas such as hospitality and catering maintain effective links with industry and commerce, which enable them to keep up to date with industrial practice. In construction, hairdressing and beauty therapy, and in the visual and performing arts and media, effective use is made of part-time staff who are currently working in the relevant industry. A high proportion of modern foreign language teachers are native speakers. The majority of the staff providing support in basic skills have relevant qualifications. Experienced and skilled employers provide good support for work-based trainees in the development of the skills required for the national vocational qualifications (NVQs).

19 In health, social studies and childcare, a high turnover of staff has had an adverse effect on students' learning. In science, there have been many changes to staffing and timetables, which have disrupted students' learning. Approximately one-third of the staff teaching key skills in

the application of number do not have an appropriate qualification.

20 Teaching staff and students receive effective support from technicians in engineering, hospitality and science, but there is insufficient technician support in sculpture and performing arts. The use of learning support assistants is not effective in basic skills, mathematics and leisure and tourism.

21 In recent years there has been insufficient staff development in many curriculum areas. Key skills and strategies for teaching and learning are topics which need particular attention. There has been insufficient sharing of good practice amongst teachers.

22 The college has good resources in the training workshops for motor vehicle mechanics and construction, but the equipment and materials used in electronics, heavy goods vehicle mechanics and body repair need updating. Hospitality students experience a wide range of high-quality realistic working environments. There is some excellent studio and workshop accommodation for the development of skills in visual and media arts. There is a good range of specialist equipment for media, photography, animation and art and design, but students on GCE A-level art and design courses have insufficient access to these specialist resources. The accommodation for performing arts is insufficient and of poor quality. Specialist equipment and accommodation are adequate in most other curriculum areas.

23 The college information technology network is well structured and has the capacity for expansion. Access to the Internet, e-mail and the college intranet is available to staff and students. However, there is insufficient open access to these resources for students. Many of the rooms housing modern computers are locked when they are not being used by a timetabled class because of a lack of sufficient staff to supervise them. In many curriculum areas

The College as a Whole

students' progress is hampered by the lack of access to suitable computer hardware or software. Some use the outdated resources that are still present in several inadequate computing facilities across the college.

24 The college is gradually improving access to learning resources for people with physical disabilities. The majority of the resources on the six floors of the main campus are accessible via specific routes and use of lifts. However, the resources in the annexe used for performing arts are not accessible to wheelchair users.

How effective are the assessment and monitoring of learners' progress?

25 Procedures for assessment at course and department level are generally well planned. Assessment methods are appropriate and meet the requirements of the awarding bodies on courses. However, good practice in assessment is not shared sufficiently across the college and there are weaknesses in a few areas.

26 Students' progress is well monitored in the majority of curriculum areas. Accurate records are kept and students are well informed of their progress. Tutorials are used very effectively in several subjects, including English, visual and performing arts and media studies, to review academic performance and to provide pastoral support to individual students. Many of the targets set for students in order to improve their work are insufficiently precise. In GCE A-level courses, very little use is made of value-added information in monitoring students' performance. There is good practice in hospitality and catering in identifying students at risk, adapting their learning plans and monitoring their progress. In a minority of courses, work is not assessed frequently enough, teachers do not monitor student progress effectively and students do not receive adequate feedback on their progress.

27 The majority of students' work is marked carefully. In a few instances, for example in science, poor work is not corrected rigorously enough and teachers' comments do not provide sufficient guidance on how to improve. Grading procedures are rigorous and consistent and the grades awarded to most students' work are fair. Internal moderation and verification procedures are generally appropriate, although these vary between subjects.

28 On modern apprenticeship programmes, there are some good examples of work-based assessment, linking effectively to procedures in college. Effective use is made of witness statements and photographs in some trainees' portfolios. However, in construction there are poor arrangements for initial assessment of vocational skills that can be acquired in the workplace, and some trainees do not collect the necessary evidence of competence to meet the requirements of the NVQ.

29 The parents of younger students are invited to the college to discuss progress with staff twice yearly. The arrangements for keeping employers informed about trainees' progress are unsatisfactory in some vocational areas. There are no routine reports on the progress of work-based learners in engineering and construction.

How well do the programmes and courses meet the needs and interests of learners?

30 The college provides a wide range of programmes and courses in most curriculum areas from entry level to level 3. There are clear routes for progression. The exceptions are in science and performing arts where level 1 and level 2 courses are not available. In line with its mission statement, the college has been particularly responsive in meeting the needs and aspirations of individual learners with a diverse range of backgrounds and experiences.

The College as a Whole

31 Widening participation has been an important priority for the college and a considerable number of local and regional partnerships have been established that seek to extend the range and breadth of provision to the wider community. Opportunities are available for students to negotiate learning programmes that are suited to their particular needs. A variety of modes of attendance and modular programmes have been developed which allow attendance during school hours, at twilight sessions, in the evenings and during summer holidays. The flexibility inherent in these programmes has improved access and retention. Outreach centres in local communities offer part-time courses in modern foreign languages. Provision for refugee and asylum seekers, minority ethnic groups, women returning learners and disaffected school pupils is expanding.

32 Links with local schools are well established and collaborative initiatives have been developed to give pupils greater access to college facilities. Approximately one hundred pupils aged 14–16 attend vocational courses for two days per week, and an increasing number of disaffected pupils participate in a structured training programme. An extensive programme for students with special needs has been established in the Access to Further Education centre. Joint arrangements between the college and local special schools have been successfully implemented, and provision has been made on vocational courses for a small number of adult students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

33 In response to Curriculum 2000, new timetables were introduced for level 3 students in September 2000, incorporating modular blocks of study and an entitlement to key skills and enrichment activities. Although recruitment to GCE advanced subsidiary (GCE AS) programmes this academic year has been low, the experience of those students who have combined the new courses with vocational programmes has been positive.

34 Cross-college enrichment activities are not extensive. However, funding for the Millennium Volunteers programme was secured in 2000 and has made a successful contribution to enrichment. One hundred students have been recruited to a range of service activities within the college and in the wider community. Additional courses and qualifications have been incorporated into the main programmes of study in several curriculum areas. For example, students in hairdressing and beauty therapy are able to take first aid, aromatherapy and personal safety courses. In some curriculum areas students are offered very few additional activities.

35 The teaching of key skills is centrally co-ordinated. However, different teams have developed their own strategies for incorporating key skills into their particular programme area and this has been achieved with varying degrees of success. When key skills have been integrated with other elements of their courses, students are motivated, understand the significance of key skills and are achieving to appropriate levels. However, when this is not the case, students are unclear about the relevance of key skills to their main subject and make little progress in developing their key skills.

36 Relations with employers are generally good, and some are excellent. The college has been responsive in meeting specific employers' needs, particularly in relation to work-based learning and work placements. Market research has been undertaken among local employers, and a new initiative to develop customer care training for the business and retail sectors has attracted interest from awarding bodies and local industry.

37 Senior managers are receptive to feedback they get from students. Responses to surveys are closely scrutinised to identify courses and areas of learning that are causing concern among students or are no longer meeting needs. Research into participation rates by postal codes has been undertaken to enable more

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effective promotional and marketing activities to be undertaken.

How well are learners guided and supported?

38 The college provides good pre-entry course information and prospective students are clear about the academic requirements. Promotional activities and campaigns are well monitored and are directed at under-represented groups. Induction is well planned and is particularly effective for those students who attend taster days in their chosen curriculum area, prior to joining a course in September. Induction arrangements for part-time students undertaking health and childcare courses are less effective. As a result, some students are placed on courses at an inappropriate level.

39 Careful initial assessment determines the level and nature of additional support which students may require. The amount of support provided has increased in recent years and now constitutes seven per cent of the college's funded activity. Take-up of additional learning support is satisfactory. However, its effectiveness is reduced by the lack of clarity in the relative responsibilities of the FE access centre and the student support services. Curriculum centres are not sufficiently involved in decisions about the deployment of learning support assistants. Most learning support plans are not precise enough to be of help in the planning of teaching or support. Hearing-impaired students are well catered for. Specialist courses provided by the further education access centre play a vital role in enabling students with particular difficulties to gain access to mainstream college provision.

40 Tutors generally provide effective pastoral support to students. However, the personal tutors handbook, which was produced in 1996, now needs updating. College policy requires each student to have a designated tutor and stipulates a minimum amount of time for personal or group

tutorials. On most courses, tutors review their students' performance regularly and devise action plans for students who are falling behind with their course work. They pursue the reasons for repeated absences or poor punctuality and contact parents if this is appropriate. However, on GCE AS and A-level programmes, absences are not routinely followed up and students who are not taught by their personal tutor do not always receive progress reviews. Arrangements for reviewing the progress of modern apprentices and some part-time students are inadequate.

41 Careers advice and guidance are provided through a well-established and productive partnership with Suffolk Careers. Operational aspects of the annual contract are determined by careers advisers at departmental level. This results in a programme closely matched to students' needs. The programme includes group sessions, briefings and interviews. Staff in the FE access centre and careers advisers work together on re-establishing contact with the small proportion of young people who are reluctant to retain contact with sources of advice and help. Tutors are well informed about the role of the careers advisors and readily refer students to them. On occasions, however, students have been referred to careers advisers when it would have been more appropriate for them to draw on the specialist knowledge of vocational tutors. Students are given effective advice and help in progressing to higher education. The college specifically funds an adviser to support adults in both further and higher education

42 The well-publicised student support unit provides a comprehensive range of services, including a childcare centre, a full-time counsellor, a landlord register and advice on health and welfare matters, careers, and study skills. There is evidence from students that access to such services has a positive impact on retention and progression. A modern and attractive information centre houses comprehensive course information and co-ordinates

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appointments to all of the support services. Reception staff are well trained and deal with students' enquiries competently. Adult learners returning to study are served particularly well by the childcare arrangements. The college access fund has provided financial assistance to students for childcare, accommodation and travel. Six hundred students, mainly part-time, have taken advantage of individual learning accounts. Information about the newly-introduced pilot educational maintenance allowance transport scheme is distributed to all full-time students. Uptake has been good, and it has enabled eligible students to have their transport costs met.

Leadership and Management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?

43 Senior managers, with the support of the Corporation, have taken effective action to improve the college's financial position. After the appointment of the current principal in August 1999, a three-year financial strategy was developed to deal with a deficit. Current figures indicate that the operational budget will break even this year. At the same time, substantial reserves have been accumulated to invest in new capital equipment. The accuracy of student enrolment and finance data has been improved.

44 Several related initiatives have been taken to tackle the fall in retention rates which became particularly evident during the last academic year. Although their impact has not been uniform across all the curriculum areas, the data available so far indicate a small up-turn in the retention rate this year for the college as a whole.

45 The college's further education provision has been given a suitably clear identity through its own management structure. A member of the senior management team reports on further

education and work-based training directly to the principal. The work is organised into a number of curriculum centres. Although most students work entirely within one curriculum centre, the timetable for Curriculum 2000 is structured so that students can choose options from other curriculum centres.

46 The quality of course management varies considerably. In some curriculum areas, effective management and leadership have resulted in high standards in students' work. In other areas, course management is ineffective. In some curriculum centres, lessons are well planned. In other centres, there is inadequate planning of lessons and teaching methods are not matched to the needs of learners. Good practice is not sufficiently shared within and across curriculum centres. Some subjects, such as mathematics and science, which are taught in a number of curriculum centres, are not co-ordinated. The teaching of key skills has been only partially successful; there are pockets of good practice in certain vocational areas, but this practice has not been developed more widely. In some centres work-based training is well managed and there is close co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training. In other centres there is no such co-ordination, there is little use of work-based assessment and trainee reviews are not carried out within the contracted time.

47 Quality assurance is based on an annual cycle of self-assessment. In some curriculum centres a clear and accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision has led to improvements. In other centres the self-assessment process has not been used effectively; self-assessment reports lack a detailed analysis of teaching and learning, and resulting action plans are vague or lack clear targets against which to measure improvements. The self-assessment process is only loosely linked to the overall operational planning of further education. Observations of teaching have been undertaken but have rarely been used as an integral part of self-assessments. A

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separate annual course categorisation process identifies courses that are performing poorly. Remedial actions identified as part of this process have resulted in improved performance. Surveys are used to determine the views of full-time students. Responses are analysed to help inform management decisions. Ninety per cent of the students surveyed were satisfied with the college provision. The views of employers are not routinely collected.

48 Performance targets are set at college, curriculum centre, and course level. The aim is for overall college retention and pass rates to be among the top quartile of further education colleges. However, the targets set by course teams are not always used effectively to improve students' performance. Questions on the student surveys provide the basis for evaluating the extent to which the college has met its charter commitments. Most targets which relate to student satisfaction have been met or exceeded.

49 The college is committed to widening participation in further education and training. Courses that exemplify this commitment include the Bangladeshi Women's information technology (IT) course and a course in computing for the visually impaired. The ethnic profile of further education students matches the profile of the Ipswich community as a whole. The college has taken part in multi-agency work aimed at recruiting from under-represented groups, for example, female returners and the visually impaired. In work-based training, equal opportunities policies are not checked systematically and the implementation of equal opportunities practices is not monitored regularly.

50 The Corporation has a clear picture of the strategic direction of the college. A comprehensive strategy document has been developed in conjunction with college staff. The Corporation successfully instigated changes to the management of further and higher education. Management information systems have been improved to provide

reliable data. The Corporation is well informed on academic matters and receives regular reports on issues such as student retention. Corporation members have formed useful links with curriculum centres and have attended college events, including two further education celebration nights. The Corporation's knowledge of academic matters is usefully aided by an independent advisory group. Governors have developed an accommodation strategy, which aims to consolidate the college on its main site. There are plans to use the capital released from the sale of surplus accommodation to enhance the teaching and learning resources.

51 Budgets are controlled tightly. The budget setting and monitoring processes have been improved to encourage more staff involvement and to ensure effective control of expenditure. A course-costing system has been developed to enable the economic viability of courses to be determined. Teachers' workloads are monitored to ensure that their time is used effectively. There has been some redeployment of teaching staff to make a better use of existing staff resources. Instructors are used, where appropriate, in practical lessons. Class sizes are monitored at the start of the academic year. During the inspection, some lessons were observed with low numbers of students on the register. Some resources, particularly computers, are not always deployed effectively to support learners.

What should the college do to improve further?

52 To raise standards and improve quality further, the principal, staff and governors should:

- sustain the current emphasis on improving retention rates;
- reduce the amount of unsatisfactory teaching;

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- review the effectiveness of teaching and learning styles on GCE AS and A-level programmes;
- improve the teaching of key skills;
- improve the range and quality of IT resources, and ensure that they are efficiently deployed;
- develop the use of target-setting and monitoring as a means of improving students' performance;
- clarify responsibilities for additional learning support, and co-ordinate it more effectively;
- improve the management and co-ordination of work-based learning in construction and engineering;
- ensure greater consistency in the management and quality assurance of curriculum areas;
- establish mechanisms for the sharing of good practice across curriculum areas.

Curriculum and Occupational Areas

Part C: Curriculum and Occupational Areas

Science and Mathematics

Overall provision in this curriculum area is **satisfactory (Grade 3)**

Strengths

- good retention rates on GCSE courses and part-time vocational courses
- good pass rates on science courses
- effective teaching in practical lessons
- good physical resources.

Weaknesses

- poor retention rates on most GCE A-level courses
- poor marking
- inadequate leadership and management of science and mathematics.

Scope of provision

53 The college provides a wide range of GCSE and GCE A-level science courses. They are available during the day and in the evening. There are opportunities for students to acquire GCE A-level qualifications in one year if they are sufficiently motivated and able. Many courses have very small numbers of students on them. Full-time vocational science courses have been provided in the past but failed to recruit sufficient students to run in 2001. Part-time vocational courses in science and pharmaceutical science have been maintained and are successful. The range of mathematics courses, including the modular scheme for the GCSE, effectively meet the needs of adults and young people. Opportunities are provided for students to study GCE A level, GCSE mathematics, and the new key skills qualification in application of number through the open access study centre.

Achievement and standards

54 The proportion of students who complete their GCE A-level courses is well below the national average for further education colleges. GCSE and part-time vocational science courses have good retention rates.

55 Students who complete science courses do well in their final examinations, and there were a number of examples of 100 per cent pass rates in 2000. This is particularly noteworthy in the part-time vocational courses. However, in the last three years many GCE A-level science students have not achieved as well as would be predicted on the basis of their entry qualifications. In mathematics, the proportion of students passing the GCE A-level examination has been below the average for similar institutions, but the pass rate improved last year. The proportion of GCSE mathematics students achieving A*–C grades is similar to the national average for students retaking GCSE mathematics in further education colleges.

56 The quality of students' work in lessons is generally satisfactory. Adult students have significantly higher levels of skills than 16–18 year olds. Students use mathematical notation correctly and can talk about the subject with understanding. Science practical work is carried out well and, in some cases, better than expected for the level and stage of courses. Many science students lack a pride in their written work, and much of it is untidy and poorly presented. However, there are exceptions. Some GCE A-level biology project work is wordprocessed and very well organised, and great care is taken over its structure and content.

Quality of education and training

57 Individual teachers plan their programmes effectively to provide a suitable introduction to the subject and to cover the syllabus. The teaching of theory is broadly satisfactory, though narrow in approach; it

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does not provide opportunities for students to experience different methods of learning. The use of class time is not well planned in most theory lessons; for example, there were many lessons where students worked through past examination papers that could have been completed more efficiently in their own time. In contrast, practical science lessons are lively and lead to effective development of students' practical skills. In GCE A-level mathematics lessons, there is an emphasis on mathematical techniques, sometimes at the expense of the development of mathematical thinking.

58 Students' learning is generally satisfactory. They approach much of their work in class with diligence and interest, and they develop good practical skills. However, some students have poorly organised notes and insufficient assessed work to support effective preparation for the examination. Although most teachers set sufficient homework, not all students hand it in.

59 The marking of students' work varies considerably. Some teachers provide clear assessment schemes and annotate the work carefully with corrections and identification of omissions. Students are well aware of how to improve this work. However, too much of the work that is accepted is below the required standard and is returned with insufficient correction on the scripts. Inspectors found examples of work having been marked carelessly, with answers that were correct marked wrong and vice versa. Not all teachers keep appropriate records of students' assessed work to enable them to monitor progress. Students' action plans are vague and do not include clear targets.

60 Teachers are academically well qualified. Science laboratories are spacious and contain furniture that is fit for its purpose. The science equipment is good. There were no examples of students' work on display in any of the laboratories. Students appreciate and make good use of a well-resourced and well-organised mathematics study centre. It contains a wide range of materials, including computer

software and printed self-study booklets, which help students to work on their own. However, the centre is not always open when students want to use it.

Leadership and management

61 The college's science and mathematics provision lacks leadership and co-ordination. Teachers in the various areas in which the subjects are taught do not meet regularly to review courses or to discuss teaching. There is no policy for setting or marking assessed work. There is no effective assessment of the quality of teaching. Action plans lack deadlines, do not identify responsibility for actions, and are not written in a way that allows their implementation to be monitored.

Curriculum and Occupational Areas

Information Technology

Overall provision in this curriculum area is **good (Grade 2)**

Strengths

- pass rates generally above FE sector averages
- effective development of students' practical skills
- well-planned and well-taught lessons
- well-managed courses.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on most courses
- failure to set challenging individual targets in a minority of lessons
- insufficient opportunities for IT related work experience.

Scope of provision

62 There is a good range of courses in computing and information technology to meet the needs of full-time and part-time students. The courses include GCE AS and A-level courses in information and communications technology (ICT), the advanced vocational certificate of education (AVCE) ICT single and double award, a National Certificate in Computer Studies, GNVQ intermediate IT, European Computer Driving Licence, Computer Literacy and Information Technology (CLAIT) and entry level programmes in IT and on-line learning with the BBC 'Becoming Webwise' materials. For those in work there are NVQ level 2 and 3 IT courses. There is currently no full-time provision at foundation level, although this will be available from September 2001. There are also few opportunities for part-time study in areas of growing popularity, such as website development and web page design.

Achievement and standards

63 The overall achievements of students completing computing courses are

good. The GNVQ intermediate IT has a pass rate of around 80 per cent. The National Certificate In Computer Studies has a pass rate of over 90 per cent and the CLAIT course has a pass rate of over 85 per cent. These rates have been consistently above national averages for the last two years. The pass rate on the GNVQ advanced IT course has improved over the last 3 years to reach the national average in 2000. Those students passing GCE A-level examinations have achieved slightly better grades than predicted on the basis of their prior attainments. Work-based trainees generally achieve an NVQ within the normally expected timescale.

64 Retention rates are below national averages on all courses except CLAIT and, in 2000, GNVQ intermediate IT. Considerable emphasis has been given to retention and there have been improvements over the last three years on the GNVQ Intermediate IT and the National Certificate in Computer Studies courses. Retention rates on GCE A-level courses remain poor.

65 Many students have a good practical knowledge of the software packages they use. GNVQ Intermediate IT, GNVQ Advanced IT and AVCE students are proficient in using spreadsheets and databases. The Internet is used effectively for research. Portfolios of work are generally of the required standard, are well presented and most are well organised. The erratic attendance of a minority of students has seriously affected their progress in completing their portfolios.

Quality of education and training

66 Most teaching is good. Lessons are well planned and there is a good balance between reinforcing and extending existing knowledge and clarifying areas of uncertainty. Learning is confirmed through the effective use of questions. In a few lessons, a minority of students are allowed to dominate the discussions. In revision lessons, advice on examination techniques

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is suitably built into the lessons. Lessons are conducted at an appropriate pace. They are enhanced through the use of relevant handouts, and questions are used to ensure that all students contribute and are appropriately challenged. In portfolio-building sessions, individual students are usually well supported and guided and make good progress in completing their assignments. In a few lessons, when students are working on their own, they are not set sufficiently challenging targets.

67 The teaching of key skills in some courses is well planned. An imaginative theme based on magazine design and production costs and market research was used to produce assignments for an AVCE group. The assignments required students to use a range of computer software including graphics, spreadsheets and a database. The work also contributed useful evidence to the other key skills of application of number and communication.

68 There are insufficient opportunities for full-time students to undertake IT related work experience. Students making decisions on progression to employment or higher education at the end of their GNVQ programmes have insufficient experience of IT-related employment on which to base their decisions.

69 Assessment meets awarding body requirements. However, the quality of feedback to students from teachers varies significantly. In the best examples, attention is given to writing style, spelling and punctuation, in addition to the comprehensive feedback on technical content. Systems for monitoring student's progress are good but have not always resulted in assignments being completed on time.

70 Resources are adequate. Students generally have access to computer workstations and software of appropriate quality. Access to the Internet is available from most computer rooms. The college intranet holds learning resources and

information on full-time programmes that are used by students. However, some inadequate peripheral equipment adversely affects the student's experience. Some workstations do not fully support web page design; there are insufficient colour printers; and too few data projectors to allow staff and students to make electronic presentations and demonstrations.

Leadership and management

71 Leadership and management of courses are generally good. There is a strong emphasis on improving students' learning experiences. Procedures for self-assessment and action planning are good. There are regular meetings between course team leaders, students' representatives and employers to identify issues requiring improvement. Internal verification is effective. Strong emphasis has been placed on strategies to improve retention rates. Student absences are followed up and this has resulted in some improvements, particularly on intermediate GNVQ courses. Reviews of provision have resulted in changes to the courses offered and improved progression routes. On work-based training programmes there are effective assessment and internal verification, and liaison with employers is good.

Curriculum and Occupational Areas

Construction

Overall provision in this curriculum area is **satisfactory (Grade 3)**

Strengths

- effective teaching
- high pass rates
- good standards of work across all programmes
- effective tutor-student relationships.

Weaknesses

- declining retention rates on some programmes
- unsatisfactory work-based training
- some poor learning resources
- slow implementation of key skills requirements.

Scope of provision

72 The college provides a broad range of construction courses at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels. These include craft, technician advanced and foundation modern apprenticeships, New Deal 18–24, and other youth training. The construction centre also provides training for the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) on a subcontracting basis. The CITB has recently been inspected by the Training Standards Council and the CITB training was not included in this inspection. Courses are relevant to the needs of local industry and match students' aspirations. Attendance arrangements are flexible and are often modified to suit the needs of individual students or employers.

Achievement and standards

73 The pass rates for those college-based students who complete their programmes are good. Pass rates on GNVQ advanced, National Certificate and NVQ level 2 and 3 programmes have been consistently higher than national averages over the last three years. In contrast, pass

rates on work-based training programmes are unsatisfactory. Progress on advanced and foundation modern apprenticeships has been slow. Of the 50 advanced modern apprentices who started training between April 1997 and March 2001, none have yet completed their apprenticeship.

74 Retention rates on NVQ level 3 and modern apprenticeships are good. However, retention rates have slowly declined on advanced GNVQ and NVQ level 2 programmes, and both rates dropped below the national average in 1999/2000.

75 The college has been slow to plan for and develop the required key skills on all its construction programmes. Some modern apprentices currently undertake key skills training alongside students on other courses. These trainees have had the start of their key skills training deferred until year two of the programme

76 The standard of students' work is mostly good. Students demonstrate an appropriate knowledge of the practical and theoretical aspects of their courses. They work to commercially acceptable standards and take a pride in their practical and written work. Regular attendance is encouraged and an attendance rate of over 80 per cent has been maintained throughout the current academic year. Many students use computers effectively to prepare the work in their portfolios.

Quality of education and training

77 Most practical and theory lessons are taught well. Learning and assessment are carefully planned and structured. Briefing notes for assignments are well constructed, informative and challenging. Teachers provide effective pastoral support, build good working relationships with students, and ensure that they make steady progress towards their qualifications. Most teachers maintain a good standard of health and safety in all teaching sessions. In a minority of the lessons, teaching is undemanding for the more able and too dull

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and slow for everyone. Teachers in these lessons often fail to confirm that progress has been made and that learning has taken place. Key skills have been made an integral part of a few courses, but, in most courses, opportunities for key skills to be developed and assessed have been missed.

78 Work-based training programmes are not successful. The introduction of key skills teaching has been slow; reviews of progress are poor; and there is weak co-ordination between on- and off-the-job training. Employers of trainees on work-based training programmes provide opportunities for skills development at work. However, employers' understanding of NVQ requirements is low and few employers are working with the college to integrate the learning that takes place at work with college tuition and assessment.

79 Full-time students undertake an initial assessment of their key skills. Initial assessment of other students is unsystematic, and identification of learning support needs for these students relies on the good will and sensitivity of teachers. Where support needs have been identified, effective support is not always provided.

80 Teachers are well qualified and have a good working knowledge of their subjects. The contribution from part-time teachers provides students and trainees with a valuable insight into current industrial practices. Some classrooms lack displays of course-related information, examples of students' work and trade product information. Many students are hampered by not having access to drawing equipment that matches industry standards.

Leadership and management

81 Leadership and management are satisfactory for most college-based courses. Communication between staff is good and a strong emphasis is placed on achievement and good teaching. Management and co-ordination of work-based training is unsatisfactory.

Curriculum and Occupational Areas

Engineering

Overall provisional in this curriculum area is **unsatisfactory (Grade 4)**

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates on level 1 motor vehicle course
- good teaching in practical lessons on motor vehicle engineering
- good work placements for level 3 full-time students and modern apprentices
- well-equipped motor vehicle workshops.

Weaknesses

- unsatisfactory retention and pass rate on modern apprenticeship programmes, and some level 2 and 3 electrical and mechanical engineering courses
- insufficient target-setting for students and modern apprentices
- ineffective planning of some lessons
- poor assessment of modern apprentices in the workplace
- inadequate specialist equipment and teaching accommodation in some areas
- unsatisfactory management of some aspects of the engineering curriculum.

Scope of provision

82 The engineering curriculum centre offers a broad range of motor vehicle, electronic, electrical and mechanical engineering courses for full-time and part-time students and work-based learners. Some 350 students and work-based trainees were enrolled on these courses at the time of inspection. Of these, 30 per cent were on motor vehicle engineering courses ranging from level 1 to level 3. Courses are offered at level 2 and level 3 in electronic, electrical and mechanical engineering. There are no full-time courses at level 1 in

general engineering. The curriculum centre is responsible for the management of over 50 modern apprentices, the majority following motor vehicle engineering programmes.

Achievement and standards

83 In 1999/2000, retention rates were unsatisfactory on electrical and mechanical engineering and motor vehicle courses at level 3. Retention was satisfactory or better on level 1 courses. Since 1997, a significant number of modern apprentices have withdrawn from their programmes without gaining a qualification.

84 Pass rates at level 3 for those students who complete courses have been broadly satisfactory on most engineering courses, but poor on the NVQ level 3 motor vehicle course. The pass rates on the intermediate GNVQ programme declined to below the national average in 1999/2000, and in 2000/2001, the course has been replaced with the First Diploma qualification. On motor vehicle programmes, pass rates on the National Certificate and Diploma courses, and the recently introduced NVQ level 1, are good.

85 Many students on the First Diploma course in engineering make poor progress in theory lessons. They find mathematical and scientific concepts difficult to grasp. Students on some level 2 general engineering courses demonstrate poor literacy and numeracy skills. Modern apprentices make slow progress in compiling portfolios as evidence of their competence.

Quality of education and training

86 In electrical, electronic and mechanical engineering, many lessons are poorly planned. For example, in some lessons, teachers do not draw out the links between theory and practice. Some students on level 2 and level 3 courses undertake practical tasks in electronics without a basic understanding of the

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operation of the circuits and components involved. There is little integration of mathematics with other aspects of electronic engineering programmes. In contrast, much practical teaching in motor vehicle engineering is good. Students on NVQ programmes approach practical tasks with enthusiasm and work well towards the attainment of practical skills. The time taken for each task is compared with that expected commercially. Many full-time engineering students on level 3 courses benefit from well-organised and relevant work placements. Course assignments are well written, and provide students with clear grading criteria. Teachers maintain good records of their students' progress, but many do not provide sufficient written comments on students' work to help them make progress.

87 Modern apprentices acquire many of the required skills during their periods of work-based training. However, there is insufficient assessment, by direct observation, of their performance in the workplace. The evidence of competence in their portfolios is too dependent on job cards with witness signatures.

88 Many students receive course handbooks that provide helpful information about the content of their courses. During induction, the additional learning support needs of students are identified, and effective in-class support is provided for students with language needs and for visually impaired students. Tutorial programmes for full-time and part-time students provide helpful general support, and the progress of full-time students is reviewed during frequent meetings with their tutors. However, measurable targets to encourage and motivate students to improve their performance are rarely agreed during these meetings. The progress reviews of modern apprentices are inadequate; action planning is poor, and the reviews are infrequent. Workplace supervisors are insufficiently involved in the review of apprentices' progress.

89 The motor vehicle maintenance workshops are well equipped. In contrast, there is a narrow range of specialist resources in the heavy goods vehicle and vehicle body repair workshops. Out-of-date test equipment and software restrict the progress and attainment of students studying electronics and computer engineering. IT facilities are inadequate and do not reflect current industry standards. Many practical lessons are well supported by technicians. The range of textbooks and journals available to students in the library is adequate, although there are insufficient modern texts in microelectronics. Some engineering theory lessons are held in engineering workshops which are poorly furnished and noisy.

Leadership and management

90 Some aspects of engineering are poorly planned and managed. For example, there is a lack of clearly documented progression routes for students, and the development of a full-time level 1 general engineering course has been slow. Operational plans for the centre and action plans arising from course reviews pay insufficient attention to how teaching, learning and students' retention and pass rates may be improved. The timetabling of some lessons is inappropriate. A few theory lessons are too long. Too much time is allocated to mathematics in the first year of the National Diploma in electronics. Centre managers and teachers do not undertake sufficient analysis of students performance. Management of work-based learning is unsatisfactory. The arrangements for monitoring work-based learning and equality of opportunity in the workplace are inadequate.

Curriculum and Occupational Areas

Business Studies

Overall provision in this curriculum area is **good (Grade 2)**

Strengths

- good pass rates on many courses
- effective teaching and learning
- well-organised and effective work-based training
- excellent public services courses
- good progression opportunities.

Weaknesses

- poor computing facilities for GNVQ students
- insufficient assessment and feedback about students' progress on some professional courses
- unsatisfactory management of GNVQ programmes.

Scope of provision

91 Business studies provision includes GNVQ foundation, intermediate and advanced courses in business and the AVCE and GCE A-levels in business studies. NVQ levels 2 and 3 in administration are offered as college courses and as part of work-based training. Medical, legal and general secretarial courses, and a range of single-subject secretarial courses, are offered. There are professional courses in accountancy, law, marketing and personnel management. First and National Diplomas in Public Services are also offered. The wide range of provision ensures that there are good opportunities for progression to further and higher education courses within the college.

Achievement and standards

92 In 1999/2000, pass rates on the majority of courses were good. On some courses, for example the First and National Diplomas in Public Services and GNVQ intermediate in business, all students who

completed the course achieved a qualification. Pass rates were well above the national average on many courses, for example NVQ administration, personnel management, management accounting and GCE A-level business studies. Pass rates on NVQ accounting and administration courses have improved over the last three years. On a few courses, including marketing and accounting at NVQ level 4, pass rates were below national averages. In 2000, retention rates on most courses were close to national averages.

93 Many students produce work of a high standard. Most NVQ administration and accounting students and trainees maintain well-organised portfolios of evidence that clearly demonstrate their attainment of knowledge, practical experience and presentation skills. Many achieve a high level of information technology (IT) skills. The practical experience gained by public services students is a good preparation for employment in the uniformed services. In the last four years, over 70 per cent of public services students have progressed to related employment. Students on a few courses have not made satisfactory progress. Few AVCE students are producing work of the standard necessary to pass the examination. Some GNVQ intermediate students do not understand basic business terminology.

Quality of education and training

94 In 73 per cent of the lessons observed by inspectors, teaching was good or better. Typically, in these lessons, objectives were clear to students, close attention was paid to individuals' needs and relevant references were made to both teachers' industrial experience and the work experience of students. Revision lessons were closely related to examination requirements. Students participated enthusiastically in class discussions and practical activities. Two lessons for first year public services students were prepared and taught by second year students. The

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teacher and two other students observed these lessons and gave detailed feedback. The second year students were mature and capable. As a result, the first year students made good progress. In an NVQ accounting lesson, students were producing business plans. The teacher provided good guidance. Market research and financial planning was thorough. Well-presented plans effectively demonstrated the viability of the students' ideas.

95 In a few lessons teaching was less than satisfactory. Weaknesses included shallow analysis of case studies, poor use of whiteboards, unclear explanations, and lessons that were either too rushed for students to understand the topic or too slow to provide challenge and maintain interest. The teaching of one GNVQ advanced business unit has been inadequate. Students' files for this unit contain almost no relevant information and the assignments set by teachers do not enable students to cover the unit specifications. On most courses assignments are clear and students are aware of the standard required to achieve a pass, merit or distinction. Teachers' comments on marked work usually indicate how students could improve. On some professional courses, students are not assessed sufficiently frequently, or given enough feedback on their progress.

96 Strong links exist between college staff and employers providing work-based training programmes. Employers provide good support for trainees and workplace supervisors. Trainees pursue qualifications that are appropriate for the level of their jobs. They have ample opportunities to obtain evidence of competence for their portfolios. College staff regularly review progress with trainees, and employers are kept well informed of trainees' progress.

97 Most staff are well qualified and have relevant industrial experience. Students on professional, administration and NVQ accounting courses have good access to modern computers. The computing room used by GNVQ students is inadequate. The

computers will not run the software necessary for the course. As a result, students do not acquire appropriate skills. For example, their presentations are typically illustrated with handwritten slides. Teaching rooms are large enough for scheduled groups, but little has been done to improve their drab appearance.

Leadership and management

98 Most business courses are well managed. Effective management of public service courses, NVQ courses and work-based learning contribute to good students' achievement. On these courses there are good schemes of work, assessment plans, internal verification systems and course reviews. Management of GNVQ courses is unsatisfactory because the course manager has too heavy a combination of teaching and administrative duties. Team meetings are not held. Schemes of work have not been submitted for several units. Some assignments are unsatisfactory and action plans do not address key issues relating to teaching, learning and achievement.

Curriculum and Occupational Areas

Hospitality and Catering

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

Strengths

- high pass and retention rates
- good teaching in both theory and practical lessons
- good standard of practical work
- wide range of enrichment activities
- effective monitoring of students' progress
- good level of support for individual students
- productive links with industry
- good range of high-quality specialist facilities
- effective course management.

Scope of provision

99 The college offers a wide range of hospitality and catering courses from entry to advanced level. The courses meet the needs of industry and provide good progression routes for students. There are arrangements to enable part-time students to attend college at times which suit their personal and work commitments. Pupils aged 14–16 from local schools attend college to study an NVQ level 1 in food preparation and serving. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are successfully taught on mainstream courses. The promotion of ethnic cookery courses has helped to increase the number of students from minority ethnic groups on catering courses. Induction programmes are well planned and include team-building activities and an introduction to health and safety.

Achievement and standards

100 The overall pass rates on courses in this curriculum area are above the national average. Retention and pass rates on NVQ level 1 catering and hospitality courses and the NVQ level 2 in food and drink service

have been consistently above the national average over the last three years. The retention rate on NVQ level 2 food preparation and cooking has improved over the last three years and is now slightly above the national average. In 1999 and 2000 all students completing NVQ level 3 courses achieved the award. The pass rate on GNVQ advanced hospitality and catering improved significantly to well above the national average in 2000. The retention rate has been about the same as the national average since 1998. Over the last two years 50 per cent of GNVQ advanced students gained higher grades. The retention rate is poor on the recently introduced AVCE single award course and in 2000 the pass rate on the Wine and Spirit Education Trust certificate was low. The majority of students gain awards in addition to their main qualification and all students achieve a basic hygiene certificate. The pass rates on key skills qualifications are high. Student progression within the curriculum area is good. Most students go on to gain relevant employment in the industry.

101 Students demonstrate an appropriate standard of technical skills in kitchens and restaurants. They achieve good standards in food preparation and pay particular attention to presentation. Students generally work well together as a team. They display good social skills when dealing with customers. Students' written work is of a high standard and most students' portfolios are well maintained.

Quality of education and training

102 There is much good teaching in both practical and theory lessons. Schemes of work are well planned. Practical lessons are well structured. Students have well-defined roles in production kitchens and in the restaurants that are open to the public. There are some good learning materials for theory and practical subjects. However, a few handouts are poorly photocopied and in need of updating. Teachers link theory teaching to practical examples from industry. In most lessons, good use is made of

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questions to check students' understanding and confirm that learning has taken place. During lessons in kitchens and restaurants, students work under appropriate pressure. Some students have not yet developed the ability to plan their own work in practical lessons and require close supervision and direction. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities work effectively with students on mainstream courses in the restaurants and kitchens. In a small minority of lessons the teaching was not well matched to the ability of learners. For example, teaching was occasionally insufficiently demanding or at an inappropriate pace and students' understanding of technical terms was not checked.

103 Assignments are well planned, interesting and vocationally relevant. The assessment of vocational courses and key skills is well planned and organised. Students' work is carefully marked. Teachers give constructive comments to help students improve their performance and errors in spelling are usually corrected. The procedures for internal moderation and verification are robust.

104 Students' learning experience is enhanced by visits to industry, study trips to France and Holland, and working at prestigious events such as the Mayor's banquet and regimental dinners. Students benefit from the college's productive links with industry through work experience and sponsored prizes.

105 Students are complimentary about the individual support they receive from their tutors. There is a high level of support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Student absences are systematically followed up. Students' progress is rigorously monitored and regularly reported to parents or guardians. Students at risk are set clear targets for improvement and provided with additional workshops to enable them to succeed.

106 Most staff have recent industrial experience. The catering facilities which include production kitchens, a pastry kitchen, restaurants, a cafeteria and a coffee shop provide excellent environments which prepare students well for employment. Equipment is mostly up-to-date. The library bookstock is adequate but some of it is dated. There is a good range of magazines and journals. Students have easy access to computers and the Internet in the computer 'drop-in' centre, and they routinely use the Internet for research. There is limited software for use in hospitality and catering.

Leadership and management

107 Management of the curriculum is effective. Significant improvements have been made since the previous inspection by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). Action has been taken to improve the quality of teaching and learning, using the findings of lesson observations. Realistic retention and achievement targets are set and progress towards them is monitored. There are clear direction and leadership in the curriculum area and communications are good. Staff meetings are held twice a week and appropriate action is taken to resolve emerging issues. Course committees meet three times a year and the actions agreed at meetings are regularly followed through.

Curriculum and Occupational Areas

Leisure and Tourism

Overall provision in this curriculum area is **satisfactory (Grade 3)**

Strengths

- good pass rates on most courses
- high proportion of good grades on some courses
- rigorous marking of assessments
- good range of additional qualifications
- effective support for learners.

Weaknesses

- poor retention rates
- some unsatisfactory teaching on leisure and sport science courses
- poor key skills teaching
- poor attendance
- some weaknesses in the management of the curriculum area

Scope of provision

108 The college offers leisure and tourism courses at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels. National Diplomas in leisure studies and sport and exercise science, together with GCE A-level sports studies, are also provided. A range of part-time courses is provided to meet the needs of the industry and students, for example, courses in Spanish and first aid and courses leading to awards for fitness instructors, community sports leaders and resort representatives. The college has established an effective partnership with the Ipswich Town Football Club Academy, to provide scholarship players with a range of curriculum options, which include GCE A levels, national diplomas and NVQ courses in sport and recreation.

Achievement and standards

109 Retention rates in 1999/2000 were below national averages on all courses. In contrast, the pass rates for those students who completed their courses were good.

Pass rates on GNVQ intermediate and advanced leisure and tourism and national diploma leisure studies courses have exceeded national averages for the last three years. Students completing GNVQ advanced and GCE A-level sport studies have also exceeded national averages for the proportion of high grades. In 1999/2000, 88 per cent of GNVQ advanced students achieved merit or distinction grades, and 60 per cent of A-level sport studies students achieved A*–C grades.

110 The quality of students' written work is satisfactory, and their portfolios are well presented. Students on the National Diploma in Leisure Studies worked successfully with a local primary school to organise a camping skills day for over 60 children. Students on the foundation level course were involved in an event management project spread over several weeks, in which they demonstrated the ability to plan, organise, work together and run the event on the day. They responded extremely well and the evidence of competence which they produced for their portfolios was well organised and thorough. Sport, leisure and tourism students generally show a satisfactory understanding of the relevant background knowledge, but they have not yet developed sufficient skills in critical analysis and evaluation.

Quality of education and training

111 Teaching is broadly satisfactory, but with some important weaknesses. Teachers are well qualified and most have relevant industrial experience. They draw on their links with local employers to provide good examples of current practice. Good use is made of visiting speakers, and a broad range of outside visits is organised to enliven programmes. Work placements provide students with opportunities to develop their practical skills in a realistic setting. Assignments are varied and challenging. Teachers are rigorous in their marking and provide excellent feedback and guidance on how to improve work. Lesson planning is usually thorough, learning

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activities are varied, and students are challenged and make steady progress.

112 Some schemes of work are poor. They comprise no more than a list of topics and have little value as an aid to planning. Some overhead transparencies are hand-written and of poor quality. No attempt is made to exploit IT in teaching methods. Some lessons are dull and unimaginative, involving inappropriate teaching methods. In some lessons, the teacher failed to maintain students' interest and, in a few, failed to maintain full control over the class.

113 Teachers are unsure what is expected of them in developing students' key skills, and this aspect of provision is unsatisfactory. The IT suite used for the leisure and tourism courses is inadequate. The outdated hardware and software makes the effective teaching and assessment of IT key skills impossible.

114 Pre-course guidance is clear. Students have the opportunity to attend helpful taster days prior to starting courses. Initial guidance and support are good. All courses have an effective induction programme which allows students to settle in quickly. Students who are deemed to be "at risk" are identified by the course team and their progress is monitored through helpful tutorials. Teachers monitor students' attendance but the information is not centrally co-ordinated and overall attendance rates are unsatisfactory.

Leadership and management

115 Some aspects of course management are good, but there are also weaknesses. Communication between staff in the course teams is effective. Course tutors monitor individual students' progress regularly. This has led to improvements in retention rates on some courses compared to last year. Course programmes are well planned by the curriculum teams. Students have the option of mixing AVCE and GCE A-level courses to suit their needs. The three-hour teaching sessions are too long and

have a negative effect on students' motivation. Monitoring of annual course reviews lacks rigour, and this has resulted in insufficiently challenging targets being set for retention, attendance and pass rates. Staff appraisal and staff development have not been effective in improving the quality of provision.

Curriculum and Occupational Areas

Health, Social Studies and Childcare

Overall provision in this curriculum area is **unsatisfactory (Grade 4)**

Strengths

- good retention and pass rates on level 2 courses
- good teaching and pass rate in GCE A-level psychology
- broad range of provision.

Weaknesses

- poor retention rate on advanced GNVQ Health and Social Care
- declining retention rates
- poor pass rate on National Diploma in Childhood Studies
- low progression rates to higher education from courses in early years, health and social care
- much unsatisfactory teaching
- disruption to students' learning due to staff turnover
- inadequate assessment of key skills
- poor leadership and management
- ineffective quality assurance arrangements.

Scope of provision

116 There is a broad range of courses in health and childcare, together with provision at GCSE and GCE A level in sociology and psychology. Full-time courses include National Diplomas, AVCE, GNVQ, and certificates and diplomas of the Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education (CACHE). A foundation level course in childcare has been introduced this year. The number of students on full-time courses has declined. The college has responded by developing a range of part-time courses in nursery nursing and childcare and education.

117 The college has worked with the local education authority to develop courses for teaching assistants, and with the local authority to develop supported housing courses. Students who follow NVQ courses and the Advanced Diploma in Childhood Education can begin their programme at one of several points in the year.

Achievement and standards

118 Retention and pass rates on the GNVQ intermediate course in health and social care and the CACHE certificate course in childhood education are well above national averages. Eighty-four per cent of students who started the CACHE certificate course in childhood education in 1999/2000 successfully completed the course. Students on these courses also perform well in relation to their prior achievements. GCE A-level and GCSE psychology also have retention and pass rates above national averages. In GCE A-level psychology, students perform well in relation to their GCSE scores on entry. The retention rate on the GNVQ advanced course in health and social care is low. Only 52 per cent of students completed the course in 1999/2000. The pass rate on the BTEC National Diploma in Childhood Studies is below the national average despite the fact that students have high GCSE points scores at entry. The pass rate on the CACHE Diploma in Nursery Nursing is also below the national average. Most other courses have retention and pass rates that are broadly in line with national averages. Retention on most courses has declined significantly this year. For example, on the GNVQ intermediate course in health and social care only 59 per cent of students who enrolled are still attending the course; the figure for the GNVQ advanced course is 43 per cent.

119 Most students on level 2 programmes demonstrate good levels of knowledge, understanding and practical skills. Their skills in oral communication are less well developed. Some students have had little work experience and their

Curriculum and Occupational Areas

vocational skills are insufficiently developed. On advanced level courses in early years and health and social care, students' written work often does not demonstrate the level of understanding and the evaluative skills expected at this level. The written work produced on the advanced diploma in childcare and education is of a high standard. A-level students in psychology develop good skills in reasoning and critical analysis. Their written work is appropriately organised and presented.

Quality of education and training

120 There is much unsatisfactory teaching. Thirty-six per cent of lessons observed were unsatisfactory or poor. In these lessons the teaching did not sufficiently challenge all students. The pace of work was slow, topics were covered superficially, and the level of debate was low. Teachers did not adapt their materials or approaches to cater for the full range of abilities in the class. In some lessons, students spent large amounts of time copying notes from the whiteboard or from books. Poor classroom management occasionally led to students becoming disruptive. There was an overemphasis on group work, which was dominated by a minority of vocal students. Work in lessons devoted specifically to key skills lessons was not related to childcare or health and social care.

121 The teaching was good in some subjects, such as advanced level psychology. In these lessons, teachers presented complex theoretical ideas using analogies and concepts that students could easily understand.

122 Teachers' comments on students' work are helpful and constructive, but work is sometimes returned to students too late. Assignments on AVCE and GNVQ courses are carefully structured. There has been insufficient work-based assessment of students on NVQ level 3 courses in childcare and education. Assessment of key

skills has been slow and has not been internally verified.

123 Students on full-time courses have regular individual tutorials and receive good pastoral support. During academic tutorials they are given clear guidance on how they can improve their work. Although students receive oral feedback on how they are progressing, they do not receive formal written reports. Tutorials are available to adult students, but not all take advantage of them. There is no initial assessment of part-time students and not all of them have an interview.

124 Most teachers have appropriate academic qualifications but not enough of them have professional experience in areas such as nursing. Childcare courses have dedicated base rooms which have been imaginatively refurbished and contain attractive displays of students work. In contrast, health and social care students are taught in a range of rooms around the college, many of which are drab and do not provide a stimulating learning environment. Students have insufficient access to computers within the department but are able to use IT facilities elsewhere in the college. Specialist and library resources are adequate.

Leadership and management

125 Leadership and management are poor. High levels of staff turnover have had a detrimental effect on the quality of students' learning. Students on the second year of the diploma in nursery nursing have had several changes of teacher in less than a year. Course leaders rarely meet together. They have poor access to computers and therefore do not get the management information they need. Despite a decline in retention rates this year, the problem has not been discussed at management meetings. Child care and health studies were merged 18 months ago, but sharing of resources and good practice among the relevant staff is poor. For example, while work placements are well

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organised for courses in childcare, the arrangements in health and social care are unsatisfactory. Some students on the National Diploma in Health Studies have not been allocated the placements needed for the course. Quality assurance procedures have not led to improvements. Poorly performing courses in health and social care have been identified but not improved. Targets for retention and pass rates are set for each course; action plans are comprehensive and detailed, but progress towards achieving the targets is not monitored and there has been no overall improvement in performance. The programme of lesson observations is ineffective and has not helped to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Curriculum and Occupational Areas

Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy

Overall provision in this curriculum area is **good (Grade 2)**

Strengths

- good pass rates on most courses
- good practical and theoretical teaching
- useful additional training opportunities
- effective individual learning programmes
- good assessment in the workplace
- effective student support.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates
- lack of opportunity for early completion of qualifications.

Scope of provision

126 The college offers a broad range of full-time and part-time courses in hairdressing, beauty therapy and holistic therapy. The courses range from NVQ level 1 to level 3. Foundation and advanced modern apprentices work towards NVQs at levels 2 and 3 in hairdressing and the appropriate key skills qualifications. The college has recently expanded its provision of part-time courses to include Indian head massage, sports massage, aromatherapy and reflexology.

Achievement and standards

127 In the year 1999/2000, with the exception of NVQ level 3 beauty therapy, retention rates on full-time programmes were low. Retention rates on part-time and work-based programmes were similar to national averages. However, retention rates have improved in the current year. Pass rates on most courses are good, and on NVQ level 3 programmes they are outstanding. Students and trainees usually achieve the qualification within the expected

time. Some have the ability to complete earlier, but are not given the opportunity to do so.

128 Students' and trainees' practical skills are at least adequate and, in some cases, above average for the level of programme. Portfolios of students' work and evidence of competence are generally well organised and presented. Many contain examples of good use of IT. In most hairdressing and beauty therapy lessons, students demonstrated good client care skills. Attendance is generally good.

Quality of education and training

129 The teaching of both the practical and theoretical aspects of hairdressing and beauty is generally good. Lessons are well planned and organised and teachers use a variety of appropriate teaching methods. They ensure the participation of all students by effective use of directed questioning and by encouraging discussion and sharing of practical experience, particularly among work-based trainees. Demonstrations are used effectively with groups and individual students. Part-time staff are particularly good at bringing current workplace practices into their teaching. Staff generally are appropriately qualified and are making good use of professional development opportunities to update their skills. Students are able to learn in a realistic working environment. Students and trainees are kept aware of their progress. They receive useful written feedback on assignments.

130 In a few lessons, students were not stretched. In beauty therapy, students were given too much time to prepare for treatments, while in hairdressing some students could have dealt with an extra client in the time available.

131 Work-based training is effective. Co-ordination between college tutors and work-based assessors is good. Eighty per cent of salons have qualified assessors who are included in the comprehensive internal verification system.

Curriculum and Occupational Areas

132 Effective and helpful individual learning programmes are devised to enable students to attend at different times and to attend a variety of appropriate lessons. In this way hairdressing students can achieve NVQ level 1 and progress through to level 3. Students speak highly of this flexibility and the helpful way in which staff meet their needs.

133 Key skills are integrated with other aspects of full-time courses in a satisfactory way. Additional courses and qualifications, such as first aid, stress management and aromatherapy, serve to extend the interests and abilities of students. In both hairdressing and beauty therapy, students and trainees take part in annual competitions and represent the college at recruitment events. All of these activities enhance their skills and employability.

134 A wide range of suitable additional support is provided for those students and trainees who need it. In some practical lessons more effective use could be made of support staff.

135 Trainees benefit from free equipment, uniforms and textbooks that can be kept if they complete their programmes. There is ready access to first aid equipment in the teaching areas. All practical rooms contain first aid boxes and eyewashes that are regularly checked. Most of the accommodation is appropriate. The reception area has been updated but is still in need of further refurbishment. The IT room used to teach key skills is inadequately resourced.

good relationships with employers, who speak highly of the good communication with the college and the regular reports they receive on their trainees.

Leadership and management

136 Leadership and management of courses are good. Communication among staff is timely and effective. Teaching and support staff work well as a team, sharing good practice across hairdressing and beauty therapy. A member of staff is particularly effective at ensuring there are good links between on- and off-the-job training for work-based trainees. There are

Curriculum and Occupational Areas

Visual & Performing Arts and Media Studies

Overall provision in this curriculum area is **good (Grade 2)**

Strengths

- high pass rates on most vocational courses
- inventive and accomplished practical work
- wide choice of specialist options for advanced level students
- good teaching
- excellent accommodation and specialist resources in art, design and media studies.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on a few courses
- inadequate accommodation for performing arts courses.

Scope of provision

137 About 400 students study on visual, performing arts and media courses. GCE A-level and AS courses are provided in photography, theatre studies, and fine art studies. Intermediate level courses include GNVQ intermediate in art and design and media and GCSE courses in art photography and critical studies. Adults can also take day and evening classes in embroidery. There is no foundation level course in visual and performing arts. There is a well-established and diverse range of level 3 vocational programmes for full-time students in visual and performing arts and media, and a pre-degree art and design foundation studies course. The courses in visual arts and media include a wide range of specialist options. There has been a low take-up by full-time students of additional subjects offered in response to the Curriculum 2000 changes.

Achievement and standards

138 In six out of seven full-time courses at intermediate and advanced level, pass rates in 2000 were well above national averages, and in performing arts the pass rate was just above average. Retention rates on the national diplomas in design and performing arts, however, were below the national average. The number of students failing to complete their studies on these courses and in the three GCE A-level subjects is a matter of concern. Progression rates are good. Art and design advanced level students are successful in gaining entry to a broad range of higher education courses. Almost all students who complete the two intermediate GNVQ courses progress to advanced level studies.

139 Students achieve high standards of work in many practical areas. In printmaking, the work is inventive and good use is made of colour. Students produce some witty and accomplished animation and illustration work. Many advanced level students have well-developed research and study skills and produce good work in their visual diaries. There is an appropriate emphasis on core vocational elements such as drawing for design students and voice for performing arts students. Practical work in performing arts lessons and rehearsals shows strong characterisation and creative ideas on movement. Some video work demonstrates clearly that students have developed their creative as well as their technical skills since starting the course. However, some written work, particularly in media, lacks clarity and analytical maturity. Students achieve less well on GCE A-level courses than on vocational courses.

Quality of education and training

140 Much of the teaching is good. Teachers plan lessons and courses carefully. Students are given stimulating assignments that encourage them to develop new skills and understanding. For example, an expressive lettering project drew from a graphics student an enterprising

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response incorporating photographs and using pebbles to construct letters in the Braille alphabet. In response to some less effectively structured assignments in design, students' sketchbooks showed insufficient use of primary source material to inform design work and develop visual ideas. Students are encouraged to develop good research and study skills. A performing arts student researched thoroughly and wrote extensively about the work of Stephen Berkoff as a basis for practical work, and a student on the art and design foundation course carried out extensive visual research on a visit to California and produced an accomplished sketch book.

141 Students focus effectively on their tasks and are fully committed to their work. Many students are articulate and show an appropriate critical awareness when describing their work. They manage their time productively, work well on their own and are mastering appropriate technical skills. In a few lessons, students were not properly prepared for the work and lacked concentration.

142 Teachers make good use of educational visits and links with local businesses and practitioners. For example, students show their work at an annual animation festival, alongside work by professional animators who contribute to an evaluation and discussion of their own work, as well the students' work. The festival, organised in conjunction with a local film theatre, is an excellent opportunity to celebrate and extend students' work.

143 There is a good range of specialist equipment in visual arts. Media students have good specialist ICT equipment and software, although there is a shortage of suitable digital equipment at peak times. The library has a large collection of videotapes but a much more limited stock of books on performing arts. Much of the accommodation is excellent. However, performing arts students are based in an old primary school, which provides a poor learning environment. The one studio

theatre is small and there are insufficient teaching rooms and studios.

Leadership and management

144 Good course management contributes to high levels of achievement. There is rigorous monitoring of students' progress and performance at course level and across the curriculum area. Careful attention is being paid to improving the quality of teaching and learning and targets have been set to increase the numbers of qualified teachers. There is effective consultation through regular team meetings and a clear focus on key issues such as curriculum review and retention rates. There is a well-developed self-assessment procedure and the action plan has precise strategies for improvement. However, staff have not yet managed to improve the performance of GCE A-level students up to the level expected, based on their GCSE scores on entry.

Curriculum and Occupational Areas

English and Access to Higher Education

Overall provision in this curriculum area is **satisfactory (Grade 3)**

Strengths

- high standard of students' work on access courses
- good pass rates for adult students
- careful monitoring and review of students' progress on access courses
- students' good study and research skills on access courses
- careful and detailed marking of students' work
- effective management of access courses.

Weaknesses

- poor pass rates in English
- poor attendance and retention rates
- poor punctuality
- a significant amount of unimaginative teaching in English
- ineffective curriculum management in English.

Scope of provision

145 There is a good range of provision catering for the needs of students aged 16–19 and adults. GCE AS and A-Level courses are offered in the daytime and in the evening in English language, English literature and English language and literature. GCSE is offered in English and English literature. A planning period for adult students returning to education is offered during the day or evening. It is accredited by the Anglia South Open College Network (ASOCN) and is effective in helping adults identify their educational and career goals and to develop a range of study skills. Many adults progress from the planning period onto courses in the college, particularly the Access to Higher Education programme. Nevertheless, there has

recently been a fall in recruitment to Access to Higher Education courses.

Achievement and standards

146 Until 2000, retention and pass rates on GCSE English had been good. However, in 2000, while the retention remained high, the pass rate dropped to well below the national average. Within this, the overall pass rate for adult students remained high. There are generally good pass rates for adult students who complete their courses. In GCE A-level English literature and the joint GCE A-level English language and literature, retention and pass rates have been consistently below national averages. In Access to Higher Education courses retention and pass rates have been close to national averages but in 1999/2000, although the pass rate rose to nine per cent above the national average, retention fell sharply to well below the average.

147 The standard of students' work is high on access courses and on some English courses. Students are often encouraged to express their own ideas orally and they respond well. Adult students in particular demonstrate that they are confident in forming judgements and marshalling evidence to support their views. In English lessons students demonstrate a good grasp of literary techniques. Students on Access to Higher Education courses have written perceptive autobiographical essays. Access students also develop independent study and research skills. They make good use of IT in their assignments. In contrast, in English little use is made of IT and students' key skills are not being developed. Attendance and punctuality are poor in many lessons.

The quality of education and training

148 Most teaching is satisfactory or better, but in a minority of English lessons the teaching is unimaginative. Teachers talk too much and fail to bring out the best in their students. In the more effective

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lessons, learning objectives are clear, and students are encouraged to express their own ideas. They use sophisticated technical language accurately when responding to probing questions. They also make valid links with other literature which they have studied. They learn new things and at the same time their previous learning is reinforced.

with the wide ability range of the students. Insufficient attention is paid to monitoring retention and pass rates, or to ways to improve them.

149 On the Access to Higher Education courses, teachers are sensitive to the needs of adult students returning to learning. They recognise the range of ability of the students and adjust their schemes of work and assignments accordingly. They support the students well while encouraging and stretching them. Students make good progress. Their progress is monitored and reviewed carefully and constructively. They have regular one-to-one tutorials during which thoughtful questioning is used to get students to analyse their own progress and to agree on targets for further progress. Students feel confident and comfortable in expressing their feelings about their studies, in assessing their progress realistically, in raising any concerns and in deciding on an appropriate course of action.

150 Careful and detailed marking of students' work helps to identify how improvements can be made. Moderation of students' coursework is thorough and accurate and in line with the requirements of the awarding bodies.

Leadership and management

151 The provision for access to higher education is well managed and effectively led. There are regular minuted meetings which focus on students' progress and the sharing of good practice. There is a commitment to build on what has already been achieved and to raise standards.

152 In English, curriculum management is ineffective. Good practice is not shared. Most schemes of work and lesson plans are inadequate. Learning outcomes and teaching methods are not adapted to deal

Curriculum and Occupational Areas

Modern Foreign Languages

Overall, provision in this curriculum area is **satisfactory (Grade 3)**

Strengths

- good pass rates on Open College Network courses
- good pass rates on GCSE courses in 1999/2000
- wide range of provision at levels 1, 2 and 3
- well-planned lessons.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates at GCE A level
- low retention rates on GCSE courses
- poor course review and evaluation
- lack of specialist resources.

Scope of provision

153 The college provides courses in a wide range of modern foreign languages at GCSE, GCE A level and Open College Network (OCN) levels 1, 2 and 3. The latter include Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Russian and Turkish, although not all of these were included in the inspection. There are also modules on two vocational courses. Numbers taking GCE AS and A-level courses are small; numbers on OCN courses are high. Courses are based in the Centre for Modern Languages in the Tertiary GCE A-level Centre of the main college and at out-centres around Ipswich.

Achievement and standards

154 There is no clear pattern in retention rates. For example, the two-year GCE A-level course in French had low retention rates of less than 60 per cent in 1998/1999 and 1999/2000, whereas the Italian one-year course had 100 per cent retention rates in both these years. The retention rate in Spanish has declined over the last three years. Pass rates in French, German and Italian GCE A levels for a small number of

students have been poor, but there has been an improvement in German in 1999/2000.

155 Retention rates at GCSE level have been generally poor, but in 1999/2000, pass rates in French, German and Italian were above national averages. Retention and pass rates on the OCN courses vary from language to language and from level to level but are generally satisfactory or good.

156 Most students are making good progress in the development of their language skills. Their written work is generally neat and well-presented and appropriate standards are being reached. However, in some lessons students made little attempt to speak the language they were learning.

Quality of education and training

157 Most teaching is either good or satisfactory. The teachers, many of whom are native speakers, use the target language effectively as the principal medium of communication. They plan their lessons well and are sensitive to the range of ability amongst the students. However, schemes of work for most courses need thorough revision. For example, essential details about which texts will be used are missing. In some lessons, teachers' expectations were high and group work was used effectively. In other lessons, the teachers did not provide students with sufficient opportunities to speak in the target language. The textbooks and newspapers used are appropriate to the level of the languages studied, but insufficient use is made of IT and video. Students' work is marked correctly and returned with comments that help students to improve their performance. Relationships between staff and students are good. There are good links with France and Italy, through which students undertake overseas visits and exchanges.

158 The language laboratory on the main college site is now fifteen years old, and in

Curriculum and Occupational Areas

need of refurbishment. Other classrooms are adequate, although some are dull and uninviting, without displays of students' work and posters which might stimulate students' interest. Resources for modern foreign languages in the college library are generally poor. There are no journals or newspapers for modern languages and only one magazine, in German. The use of community centres in Ipswich and in neighbouring villages increases access for local people to learning in modern languages.

Leadership and management

159 In recent years, the management of modern foreign languages has been weak. In November 2000, as a result of college restructuring, modern languages were relocated to the Tertiary GCE A-level Centre, with the Senior Lecturer for modern foreign languages reporting to the head of centre. As a result, management of the area has improved. However, no review or evaluation of modern foreign language courses was carried out last academic year and the analysis of retention and achievement data has not been rigorous. There is no action plan to deal with low retention rates.

Curriculum and Occupational Areas

Basic Skills

Overall provision in this curriculum area is **satisfactory (Grade 3)**

Strengths

- strong commitment to basic skills across the college
- examples of good progress in basic skills
- effective teaching
- good staff training.

Weaknesses

- insufficiently comprehensive initial assessment
- inadequate recording of students' progress
- insufficient use of IT
- inadequate monitoring and evaluation.

Scope of provision

160 Suffolk College is a member of the Suffolk Learning Partnership, which is developing a county-wide basic skills strategy. The college offers full-time and part-time basic skills provision. Support is provided in all curriculum areas, and on New Deal and work-based training programmes at, or below, level 2. Support is offered in several ways: by the use of learning support assistants in lessons; through separate support sessions, sometimes leading to a basic skills qualification; and by the provision of core subjects on full-time or part-time programmes. The provision is co-ordinated by the access centre, where there is provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, for groups of young 'disengaged' people, and help with English for speakers of other languages.

161 The college also provides some community-based basic skills courses, under a partnership agreement with the local education authority, which currently takes the lead in providing basic skills courses for

adults. These courses were not included in this inspection.

Achievement and standards

162 Some students' portfolios contained work which showed clear progress in basic skills over the year. In other portfolios, there was less evidence of progress in basic skills, and more emphasis on the collection of evidence for the awarding body. Individual learning targets are not set for students requiring basic skills support. This makes it difficult to know how much progress some students are making in basic skills. The numbers of students taking literacy and numeracy qualifications is relatively small, and pass rates vary from 33 per cent to 100 per cent.

Quality of education and training

163 Most teaching is satisfactory. The most effective teachers develop many of the learning resources themselves to match individual students' requirements. They make their lessons vocationally or personally relevant to the students. On entry-level courses there were examples of effective project-based teaching approaches which met a wide variety of learning needs. However, some lessons at this level were too long. In well-planned lessons, learning support staff were told in advance what would be done. This helped them to work appropriately and sensitively with students. However, in some lessons, learning support staff helped students too much. In a few cases at entry level, where all students were asked to complete the same task irrespective of their ability, learning support staff were used to provide extensive support for tasks that were too difficult for some students.

164 The initial assessment process does not provide an adequate basis for programme planning. In most areas of the college a basic screening test is the only instrument used for initial assessment. Additional tests to identify more specific needs are only used in a few areas.

Curriculum and Occupational Areas

Recording of learners' progress is generally poor. Individual basic skills targets are not set for students and progress in basic skills is not adequately monitored. Each student who receives basic skills support has a learning support agreement. The student is expected to complete a self-evaluation at the end of every session. However, its completion is regarded as a chore by some students and teachers, who give it scant attention. The generalised self-assessment comments give little indication of progress in basic skills.

165 The expansion in foundation and entry level provision over the past two years has resulted in a considerable increase in the need for learning support assistants. As a response to this, numbers have been increased from 6 to 36 and a co-ordinator has recently been appointed. Staff-to-student ratios for basic skills are now good. Attempts are made to recruit staff who have relevant vocational knowledge. The college has a good staff development programme for all staff involved in basic skills. Most of the basic skills tutors and the learning support assistants have completed or are taking a basic skills qualification. This initial training is supplemented by a helpful programme of in-house training events.

166 The accommodation for basic skills varies across the college, but is mainly satisfactory. There is insufficient use of IT to enhance students' learning in basic skills. More computers are needed in classrooms.

Leadership and management

167 The development of basic skills courses is part of the college's strategic plan. Provision at entry and foundation level has been expanded and further expansion is planned for 2001/2002. The college has recently developed a basic skills policy and a costed development plan, which will lead to greater involvement in the local community. The head of further education chairs monthly meetings of the basic skills provision committee, which has members from each curriculum area. There are also

termly meetings with basic skills link tutors from each curriculum area. The new arrangements for managing the expanded provision are appropriate, but have yet to become well established. The link tutors do not always have sufficient time to co-ordinate basic skills work in their curriculum areas and there is insufficient dissemination of good practice from one curriculum area to another.

168 There are insufficient monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of the basic skills work. Some students in construction who need basic skills support were not receiving it at the time of the inspection. Some staff are confused about the shared responsibility for basic skills work between staff in the curriculum areas and those based centrally. The self-assessment of basic skills provision involved staff in all the curriculum areas. The outcome was suitably self-critical and identified many of the strengths and weaknesses. An action plan has been developed which is starting to address the weaknesses.

College Data

Part D: College Data

Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age, 1999/2000

Level	16–18	19+
1	16%	19%
2	27%	16%
3	29%	18%
4/5	10%	42%
Other	18%	5%
Total	6,576	11,073

Source: Provided by the College in Spring 2001

Table 2: Enrolments by Curriculum Area and Age 1999/2000

Curriculum Area	16–18 No.	19+ No.	Total enrolments %
Science	965	1,099	12
Agriculture	0	2	0
Construction	266	302	3
Engineering	520	544	6
Business	1,025	1,539	15
Hotel & Catering	722	201	5
Health & Community Care	875	3,342	24
Art & Design	607	364	6
Humanities	1,504	3,493	28
Basic Education	92	187	2
Total	6,576	11,073	100

Source: Provided by the College in Spring 2001.

College Data

Table 3: Retention and achievement

NVQ Level (long courses)	Retention & pass rate	16–18			19+		
		1997/98	1998/99	1999/00	1997/98	1998/99	1999/00
1	Starters excluding transfers	209	453	493	495	380	540
	Retention rate (%)	88	77	82	88	77	74
	National average (%)	81	81	N/A	79	78	N/A
	Pass rate (%)	83	67	72	71	70	76
	National average (%)	58	61	N/A	61	62	N/A
2	Starters excluding transfers	963	1,182	1,469	1,102	1,020	1,321
	Retention rate (%)	79	73	76	82	81	70
	National average (%)	76	77	N/A	79	79	N/A
	Pass rate (%)	75	80	77	74	76	77
	National average (%)	63	67	N/A	65	66	N/A
3	Starters excluding transfers	1,635	1,546	1,336	1,467	1,354	1,269
	Retention rate (%)	83	82	72	83	83	77
	National average (%)	77	77	N/A	78	79	N/A
	Pass rate (%)	79	79	83	67	64	71
	National average (%)	70	72	N/A	64	66	N/A
H	Starters excluding transfers	54	52	48	515	611	545
	Retention rate (%)	100	96	85	93	90	85
	National average (%)	83	83	N/A	83	84	N/A
	Pass rate (%)	97	58	36	72	63	76
	National average (%)	65	65	N/A	58	62	N/A

Note: Summary of retention and achievement for the last 3 years by age and level of course, compared against national averages for colleges of the same type (i.e. General FE and tertiary colleges).

Sources of information:

1. National averages: *Benchmarking Data 1996/97 to 1988 /99: Retention and Achievement Rates in Further Education Colleges in England*, The Further Education Funding Council, September 2000
2. College rates for 1997/8–1998/9: *Benchmarking Data 1996/97 to 1998/99: Retention and Achievement Rates*, produced by the Further Education Funding Council, September 2000.
3. College rates for 1999/2000: provided by the College in Spring 2001.

College Data

Table 4: Summary of grades awarded to teaching, learning and attainment 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	53%	31%	16%
19+ and WBL*	62%	24%	14%
Learning 16–18	51%	32%	17%
19+ and WBL	63%	27%	10%
Attainment 16–18	43%	37%	20%
19+ and WBL	56%	39%	5%

Key: Inspectors grade three aspects of lessons: teaching, learning and attainment. The range of grades includes: excellent(grade 1), very good(2), good(3), satisfactory(4), unsatisfactory(5), poor(6) and very poor(7).

*WBL= work based learning.