



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards  
in Education

**Inspection report**  
**Isle of Wight**  
**14 to 19 Area Inspection**

Dates of inspection: 29 September–3 October and 10–14 November 2003

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This inspection was carried out under Section 65 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000. It was a joint inspection by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI).

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**Basic information about the area inspection**

Name of area: Isle of Wight

Reporting inspector: Paul Curry HMI

Dates of inspection: 29 September–3 October and 10–14 November 2003

## Introduction

The Learning and Skills Act 2000, as amended by the Education Act 2002, gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) of Schools the power, working with the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI), to inspect the provision of 14 to 19 education and training in an area. The *Area Inspection Framework* sets out the principles that apply to the inspections of the provision of non-higher education (HE) and training made by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), local education authorities (LEAs) and their partners within an area. This inspection was carried out under section 65 of the Learning and Skills Act by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and the ALI.

This inspection covered the area of the Isle of Wight. Inspectors analysed statistical and documentary evidence, considered the views of providers and of learners, and interviewed officers of the local LSC, LEA, Connexions and local learning partnerships; senior staff in schools, colleges, and training providers; elected members of the council; governors, parents and young people. Inspectors visited schools, colleges and training providers to evaluate the quality of provision for learners aged 14 to 19. Inspectors also took account of the evidence and findings of previous inspections of training providers, schools and colleges in the area.

## Executive summary

The effectiveness and efficiency of education and training across the area in meeting the needs of learners, employers and the community are satisfactory overall. The plans of the main 14 to 19 stakeholders demonstrate a clear commitment to improve levels of participation and achievement. Successful initiatives to promote collaboration between providers have been recently introduced, including a common timetable for 20% of the General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced Subsidiary (AS) subjects offered. The local LSC has effectively intervened to support the college and a number of work-based training providers in improving their performance. Levels of participation in post-16 education and training are high. The number of unknown destinations and the number of learners not in education, employment or training (NEET) have been reduced. Levels of achievement in the college have significantly improved and are now well above national benchmarks. The standards of teaching in school sixth forms and in the college are good. Currently, no explicit strategy for 14 to 19 education and training exists with agreed success measures. Not enough consideration has been given to the appropriate balance of academic and vocational provision. The action taken by the LEA, elected members and governors to improve the unsatisfactory General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) performance in schools has not, so far, been successful. Some class sizes in sixth forms are small and this raises questions about their viability. Work-related learning in schools is not sufficiently developed. There is no comprehensive directory of learning opportunities for pupils beyond Key Stage 4. Too much teaching in schools at Key Stage 4 has been only satisfactory.

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**The following grades were allocated:**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Grade</b>
1. Strategy for 14 to 19 education and training	Unsatisfactory
2. Achievement	Satisfactory
3. Access to, and participation in, education and training	Satisfactory
4. Quality of 14 to 19 education and training	Satisfactory
5. Guidance and support	Satisfactory
6. Leadership and management	Satisfactory
	<b>Overall grade</b>
How effective and efficient is the provision of education and training across the area in meeting the needs of learners, employers and the community?	Satisfactory

*The grades are allocated according to the criteria contained in the area inspection framework and using the descriptors in the common inspection framework. And using the scale: outstanding, good, satisfactory, unsatisfactory and very weak.*

## Main findings

1. The Isle of Wight has a population of close to 133,000 inhabitants, nearly half of whom are aged over 45. Together with Portsmouth, Southampton and Hampshire, it forms the sub-region covered by the local LSC. The LEA boundary covers the island rather than the sub-region as a whole. Levels of unemployment on the island are close to national figures, although there are considerable seasonal fluctuations owing to the significance of the tourist industry. The gross domestic product of the island is the sixth lowest in the United Kingdom. The largest employment sectors are public administration and tourism; small-sized and medium-sized enterprises dominate the local economy. Some high technology companies, particularly in composites, are supporting growth in manufacturing.
2. The individual strategic or development plans of the main 14 to 19 stakeholders demonstrate a clear commitment to increasing levels of participation and achievement in education and training. The local LSC, in conjunction with the LEA, has acted to identify and resolve some key issues adversely affecting the quality of 14 to 19 provision on the island. These relate principally to the historically poor performance of some providers and overcapacity in post-16 education and training provision. A number of successful developments have resulted, including a shared timetable for minority GCE AS level subjects and the joint appointment of a 14 to 19 co-ordinator. As yet, however, there is no explicit 14 to 19 strategy to consider how collaboration might be further developed, including the agreement of success criteria. Unsatisfactory GCSE performance has not been sufficiently addressed as part of the objective to raise levels of achievement. There is a lack of clarity about the future role of advisory groups in tackling the issue of overcapacity. The appropriateness of the balance between academic and vocational provision has not been sufficiently analysed.
3. The local LSC has demonstrated effective leadership through its intervention strategies to rectify poor performance by some providers. Achievements at the further education (FE) college have improved significantly so that they are now good; standards in work-based training are now satisfactory or better. The LEA has not yet succeeded in securing improvements in GCSE performance, which has remained unsatisfactory for a number of years. There is also not enough evidence of elected members and governors sufficiently challenging the achievements of the high schools to secure better performance. Leadership and management in individual providers have, in inspection reports, largely been judged as good. The self-assessment report produced for the area was comprehensive and appropriately self-critical. There is insufficient analysis of equal opportunities data across the area as a whole and there are no consistent measures agreed to assess value for money in the delivery of education and training. Inspectors were not able to obtain consistent data for participation and achievements in work-based learning.
4. Levels of post-16 participation in education and training are relatively high. The GCE AS and Advanced (A) level curriculum in schools is broad. However, the size of some teaching groups is very small. In order to preserve minority subjects, a common timetable covering 20% of subjects was introduced in September 2003 which has been successful in recruiting students to 10 AS subjects. Currently, however, the common timetable only involves the high schools. In order to rationalise provision there is an understanding that,

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post-16, schools will focus primarily on academic subjects and the college on vocational courses. The range of vocational provision offered by the college covers most levels and areas of learning. However, some sixth forms still continue to offer vocational programmes even though group sizes are small. At Key Stage 4, the Increased Flexibility Programme (IFP) has significantly contributed towards nearly a quarter of pupils experiencing some form of vocational learning. Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) take part in this programme; post-16 transition arrangements for this group of learners are good. Other social inclusion initiatives, for example, specialist tuition for teenage mothers, are effective. High schools provide appropriate opportunities for enrichment activities; they are generally unsatisfactory at the college. There is insufficient co-ordination and promotion of work-related learning in schools. Productive partnerships between the college and work-based trainers have been established although the number of learners taking part in modern apprenticeship schemes is declining.

5. The Connexions service has been successful in reducing the number of learners for whom destinations are unknown as well as those who are not in education, employment or training. Connexions information points are well established in schools and in the college. Whilst most pupils at Key Stage 4 receive careers interviews from personal advisers, the range of information provided about post-16 options is insufficiently comprehensive. A pupil referral unit (PRU) has been successful in re-integrating pupils aged 14 to 16 back into mainstream schools with the result that there are currently no permanent exclusions. Pastoral care and support for young people, on the part of all providers, is good, however, information about the progress of learners is not sufficiently shared within or between institutions.

6. Overall GCSE achievements are unsatisfactory. The proportion of pupils who achieved five or more GCSEs at grades A\* to C in 2003 was well below the England average and below all of the island's LEA statistical neighbours. This pass rate has remained relatively static over the last three years. At GCE A level, pass rates in the high schools are close to national and statistical neighbour figures, although there are considerable variations between the performance of male and female students within schools. Advanced vocational performance in schools is good, although with relatively small numbers of students. Achievements at the college for students aged 16 to 18 on vocational programmes have improved greatly over the last three years to a level where headline pass rates are now well above national benchmarks. On work-based training, success rates on modern apprenticeships are close to national figures; they are good for some individual providers. Too much teaching at Key Stage 4 is only satisfactory; it is good and sometimes very good in school sixth forms. In the recent inspection report of the college, 69% of teaching was judged to be good or better; this is above the sector average. In work-based learning, training is satisfactory overall. The accommodation of providers is mainly good; information and communication technology (ICT) resources at the college are of a high standard. Staff turnover and levels of absence through illness are relatively high in the schools.

7. This report identifies strengths that should be built upon and weaknesses that need to be addressed if progress is to be made. In order to guide the local LSC, LEA and their partners, recommendations are included following each section of the report. The local LSC, LEA and partner organisations should consider these and incorporate suitable responses in the action plan for the further development of the 14 to 19 strategy for the area.



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8. Strengths in the current provision, upon which improvement may be based, include:

- a clear commitment on the part of the main stakeholders to increase levels of participation and achievement in education and training
- the successful introduction of a common timetable for some GCE AS subjects
- effective intervention strategies on the part of the local LSC resulting in improvements in the performance of some providers
- high levels of participation in post-16 learning
- successful strategies on the part of the Connexions service to reduce the number of unknown destinations and of young people not in education, employment or training
- significantly improved achievements at the FE college, now well above national benchmarks
- good and very good standards of teaching in school sixth forms and the college.

9. The local LSC, the LEA and their partners have some weaknesses to overcome. The most significant, requiring concerted and urgent action, are:

- the absence of an explicit 14 to 19 strategy for education and training
- the lack of consideration about the appropriate balance of academic and vocational provision
- insufficient action by the LEA, school managers, elected members and governors to address unsatisfactory GCSE performance in schools
- some very small class sizes in school sixth forms
- insufficient co-ordination and promotion of work-related learning in schools
- the absence of sufficiently comprehensive information about the full range of post-16 learning opportunities
- too much teaching at Key Stage 4 which is only satisfactory.

### **Features of the area and its context**

10. The Isle of Wight has a population of nearly 133,000 with a workforce totalling approximately 54,500. Nearly half the population are aged over 45; one in four are of retirement age. The proportion of the population from minority ethnic backgrounds is low. The unemployment rate, at 2.3%, is above that for the South-East region, but close to the national average for England. The island experiences significant cyclical changes to unemployment owing to the seasonal demand for labour, particularly in the tourist industry.

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Wage levels are only 74% of the regional average and in 2001, 44% of the working population earned less than £10,500 per annum. The gross domestic product of the island is the sixth lowest in the United Kingdom.

11. Levels of skills and qualifications on the island are below regional and national averages. Nearly a third of the workforce has no qualifications and nearly 50% have no level 2 qualifications compared to the regional average of 40%. Basic skills agency data show about a quarter of the adult population having poor literacy and numeracy skills.

12. Small to medium-sized enterprises dominate the local economy with 92% of organisations employing fewer than 25 people. Public administration and tourism form the two largest employment sectors, the latter generating an annual income of over £300 million. Manufacturing remains an important sector with a growth of high-technology companies in composites, aerospace and electronics. The island has been successful in attracting significant regeneration funding. Up to 2002, projects provided grants of £11.3m supporting developments with a total value of £43.6 million. Further major funding has been agreed to support a major regeneration project at Cowes waterfront.

13. The island operates a three-tier maintained-school system with 46 primary schools (4 to 9 years), 16 middle schools (9 to 13 years) and 5 high schools (13 to 18 years). Two of the high schools, Carisbrooke and Medina are close to Newport, the other three, Cowes, Ryde and Sandown are located in the coastal population centres. Carisbrooke and Ryde high schools have specialist status for sports and modern foreign languages respectively. Sandown is a designated teaching training school. Two all-age special schools have recently been re-organised into primary and secondary schools for pupils with complex learning difficulties. The LEA also maintains two PRUs: one for primary, the other for secondary pupils. There are, in addition, three independent schools on the island. The single FE college is located in Newport. During 2002/03, the college enrolled 921 full-time and 239 part-time students aged 16 to 18. The local LSC currently contracts with five island work-based training organisations as well as other regional and national providers.

### **The strategy for 14 to 19 education and training**

14. The key 14 to 19 stakeholders on the island demonstrate a commitment towards raising levels of participation and achievement in education and training through their individual development plans. For example, the local strategic partnership in its corporate plan 'Island Futures' seeks to promote greater participation in learning, secure high-quality and cost-effective provision and improve provider collaboration. The local learning partnership, in its three-year business plan, makes a commitment to work with other stakeholders to increase flexibility in the 14 to 19 curriculum; the objectives in the Connexions island delivery plan include raising aspirations and participation through an integrated support service. The education development plan (EDP) produced by the LEA includes explicit priorities to raise achievements at Key Stage 4 and to develop 14 to 19 curriculum coherence: these priorities include increasing flexibility and raising post-16 attainment. The local LSC's annual plan makes specific reference to the initiatives being taken on the island to secure more coherent 14 to 19 provision.

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15. The local LSC, in conjunction with the LEA, has acted to identify and resolve some of the key issues adversely impacting on 14 to 19 provision on the island. In 2001, as a result of concerns about the performance of the FE college and the island's training providers, the local LSC commissioned a number of external reports in order to consider different models of 14 to 19 organisation. The terms of reference included a priority to address the problem of over-capacity in provision, which resulted in over half the classes for students aged 16 to 18 comprising fewer than nine students. Other priorities were to improve the quality of both academic and vocational provision and develop a partnership with the LEA to improve both the configuration and delivery of 14 to 19 education and training. A 14-plus task group was established, comprising members of the main education and training providers on the island, to consider approaches towards a more integrated approach to planning and resourcing post-14 education and training.

16. As a result of the reports and the recommendations of the task group, a collaborative model of provider organisation was agreed, together with the establishment of a new Tertiary Strategy Group. The Tertiary Strategy Group was tasked to provide further advice to the LEA and local LSC on the forms that collaboration might take to minimise overlap and duplication in education and training whilst meeting the needs of students and employers. The Tertiary Strategy Group comprises a broad range of members both from education and training and is representative of the major stakeholders.

17. A number of successful developments have resulted from the work of the Tertiary Strategy Group. A 14 to 19 co-ordinator, jointly funded by the major stakeholders on the island, has been appointed. A detailed curriculum audit of enrolments by course and provider across the island has been undertaken. A common timetable for some GCE AS subjects in the high schools has been introduced with the principal objective of preserving minority subjects, for example, those in some modern foreign languages. LEA and local LSC officers now meet regularly to discuss collaboration issues.

18. These positive initiatives have not been matched, however, by an explicit 14 to 19 strategy which might consider whether and how collaboration is to be further developed. The need for better 14 to 19 strategic planning is recognised in the area investment framework of the Isle of Wight Economic Partnership. The absence of a plan has meant that success criteria for collaboration are only just being developed. There has been no detailed contingency planning to consider alternative configuration models if the collaborative approach does not succeed in rationalising capacity. At present, pupils at Key Stage 4 do not have a comprehensive directory of post-16 learning opportunities. The current unsatisfactory levels of achievement at Key Stage 4 have also not been successfully addressed as part of the partners' aim to improve the quality of provision. The absence of an overall plan has meant that the future of the Tertiary Strategy Group itself is uncertain as there are differing views about which organisation should lead future 14 to 19 development.

19. The balance between academic and vocational provision has not been comprehensively analysed. The targets in the LEA 14 to 19 performance management plan demonstrate a commitment to significantly increase the volume of vocational provision at level 2 but not at level 3. The Tertiary Strategy Group has not systematically considered the extent to which the 14 to 19 curriculum should meet the needs of the local labour market or the interests of learners. Employers have yet to contribute significantly to the debate about an

appropriate vocational curriculum for the island, although they have started to make a contribution to strategic groups such as the employer 'learning hub' established in the growth area of composites. The large numbers of learners aged 14 to 16 progressing through vocational programmes, in particular the IFP, will need to be considered in any future island curriculum plan with provision made for appropriate academic and vocational pathways.

***Recommendations:***

- a. The key partners should progress the development of an explicit 14 to 19 education and training strategy linked to an area curriculum plan and measurable success criteria.
- b. Key stakeholders should consider alternative configuration models in the event that collaboration does not succeed in rationalising overcapacity on the part of providers.
- c. The balance between academic and vocational provision should be more comprehensively analysed to meet both the needs of employers and the interests of learners.

**Leadership and management**

20. The local LSC has provided effective leadership towards improving 16 to 19 education and training provision. It has successfully intervened to support the college in improving standards. For example, a new principal with an established record of success was appointed; links with other high-performing colleges in the sub-region were developed to promote and share good practice. As a result, achievements for this group of learners at the college have improved so that aggregate pass rates at all levels are now well above national benchmarks. The recent inspection report on the college confirmed that standards of teaching and learning are good. Similarly, intervention strategies in work-based learning have resulted in previously unsatisfactory provision being improved and judged as satisfactory in the case of one provider, with good progress being made in another.

21. The LEA has not yet succeeded in securing sufficient improvement in schools' performance at Key Stage 4. GCSE achievements remain well below national and statistical neighbour averages despite targeted activities in the EDP. The proportion of pupils who achieved five or more GCSEs at grades A\* to C in 2003 was well below the EDP target of 51%; the proportion achieving five or more A\* to G grades in the same year was also below expectations. Ofsted inspection reports have identified some weaknesses in teaching and learning at Key Stage 4. The LEA is providing professional development for subject leaders in the high schools to promote higher standards in core GCSE subjects, and other middle-management training, but these initiatives have yet to improve standards. Whilst GCE A-level achievements are satisfactory overall, insufficient consideration has been given to the analysis of students' performance relative to their GCSE grades. Significant differences arose between the performance of male and female students in some of the high schools in 2003; these differences require further analysis and action. There is insufficient evidence of elected members and governors challenging the high schools about their achievements in order to promote improvements in performance.

22. Leadership and management within the 14 to 19 providers on the island have been judged generally good in inspection reports. In the college, the leadership provided by the principal was judged to be exemplary with an open and responsive management style. In

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three of the high schools, leadership and management were graded as good; they were weak in one school and satisfactory in the other. Overall, leadership amongst work-based learning providers is satisfactory.

23. A thorough evaluation of the quality of 14 to 19 provision on the island was provided in an area self-assessment report agreed by the main stakeholders. Overall strengths and weaknesses were considered together with a detailed analysis of provision according to the main headings of the *Area Inspection Framework*. The judgements made were largely accurate and appropriately self-critical. As part of the collaboration strategy, quality assurance mechanisms are being developed. These include surveys of student perception of vocational provision at Key Stage 4 and of the GCE AS and A-level common timetable, course review instruments and the production of a programme quality file. A steering group, with representatives from all the participating institutions, has been established to monitor the performance of IFP. Inspections of work-based learning have identified inadequate quality assurance arrangements in a number of providers, although recent reports indicate they are improving. In the college, the inspection report judged effective use had been made of consultancy support to bring about improvement, although routine quality assurance procedures were not yet fully embedded.

24. There is insufficient analysis of data relating to equal opportunities across the area as a whole. Significant gender imbalances exist on some programmes, for example, entry to employment (E2E) and IFP. So far, there has been no analysis by gender of participation in the post-16 common timetable for GCE AS and A levels. A start has been made by the local LSC to develop measures which assess the impact of strategies to promote equality of opportunity although there are gaps in some of the available data, for example, information about disability and ethnicity is not always declared in individual learner records. Initiatives have been taken by the LEA in the high schools to provide better physical access for pupils with restricted mobility, however, the LEA has been slow to provide guidance and training for schools in producing race equality plans.

25. The self-assessment report recognises that there is not a consistent approach to assessing value for money in the delivery of education and training. In the high schools, GCE AS class sizes average close to 15 students; this suggests satisfactory value for money. However, in the second year of the GCE A-level programme, the average size drops to below nine students, meaning that some classes are being subsidised from other aspects of provision. For example, enrolments in some science subjects are as low as three students; those in some modern foreign languages subjects are even smaller. Class groups in the college have been made viable by the combining of year groups in some cases and by the use of information technology (IT) to facilitate supported self-study in a virtual learning environment. The LEA was judged to provide satisfactory value for money in a recent Ofsted inspection; its net expenditure per pupil at Key Stage 4 is close to that of its statistical neighbours. Additional funding has been used creatively to widen participation. For example, European funding has been used to provide taxis to transport students between schools as part of the common-timetabling arrangements.

26. Data collection and analysis are not always sufficiently accurate. For example, the local LSC recognises that there have been difficulties in reconciling provider and centrally held data in producing achievement figures for work-based learning. Inspectors also found

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difficulty reconciling the data produced by Connexions which show low enrolment figures on work-based learning with much higher figures produced by the local LSC. Early versions of the 14 to 19 area curriculum map provided for inspectors contained a number of inaccuracies.

**Recommendations:**

- d. The LEA should identify and disseminate best practice at Key Stage 4 and ensure that teaching methods and the curriculum appropriately meet the needs of all learners, in order to secure higher standards.
- e. Elected members and governors should challenge the performance of schools more closely in order to bring about improvement, particularly at Key Stage 4.
- f. Value for money indicators should be developed to enable judgements to be made about the cost-effectiveness of provision within and between the different providers.

**The curriculum and access to, and participation in, education and training**

27. More than 88% of pupils at the age of 16 progress to full-time or part-time education or employment with training: this is higher than the rate for England as a whole. According to data produced by the Connexions service, of the 1,562 pupils aged 16 in 2003, about half stayed on in school sixth forms, a further 22% progressed to college programmes and about 5% to work-based training. Progression rates to HE on the island are close to the average for all LEAs in England. The college is encouraging more learners to progress to HE, for example, through its links with University College Chichester. The opening of a HE centre is under consideration.

28. The post-16 curriculum in schools focuses mainly on GCE AS and A-level and AVCE provision. The size of sixth forms varies considerably, from fewer than 200 students at Medina to over 350 at Sandown. Together the schools offer over 40 subjects at GCE AS and A level. However, there is considerable duplication of provision and some class sizes in a number of subjects are very small. Schools have not yet developed common subject specifications which might better facilitate students transferring between institutions as well as promote more collaborative staff development. The common timetable, offered during two afternoons a week from September 2003, enables a number of subjects, which would not be viable in a single school, to be offered across all institutions. Teaching, for the different subjects offered, is based in the different high schools. Currently 10 AS subjects are available, including German, Spanish and music. In spite of this initiative, some teaching groups outside the common timetable, for example, those in French and chemistry, comprise less than five students, raising questions about their future institutional viability. In addition, the common timetable only operates between schools; students at the college are unable to take advantage of opportunities to combine academic and vocational study. Equally, students at school are unable to combine academic subjects with wider vocational options at the college and work-based learning providers.

29. In order to rationalise post-16 provision better between providers, the college reached an understanding with schools that it would cease delivery of full-time GCE AS and A-level courses from September 2002. In turn, the college would develop further specialist vocational provision. Currently, a broad range of vocational programmes is offered by the

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college; general vocational awards have been replaced by first and national diplomas which are seen as more appropriate for the type of student the college enrolls. In spite of this understanding, schools continue to offer, and in some cases have expanded, vocational provision even though group sizes are often small. In addition, some of the students interviewed on these programmes were not always aware of the progression opportunities available at the college for more specialist vocational study. Two schools have designated specialist status for sports and languages respectively. However, they have relatively low numbers of post-16 students undertaking these subjects as other providers continue to run the same or similar courses.

30. A partnership between the high schools, special school and the college has led to the successful establishment of the IFP involving over 200 pupils at Key Stage 4. The programmes offered comprise National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) at levels 1 and 2 and vocational GCSEs. This initiative, together with other vocational programmes at Key Stage 4 in the schools, has resulted in about a quarter of all pupils experiencing some form of vocational learning. Some particularly successful courses include those in construction, engineering, ICT, countryside studies, hairdressing and beauty therapy. Through their study, pupils are able to gain a wide range of practical and craft skills and are exposed to a wider range of progression opportunities in FE, training and employment. Pupils from the SEN school receive effective additional support on IFP; the post-16 transition arrangements for these pupils are good.

31. Social inclusion initiatives for young people at risk of leaving education and training are actively promoted. For example, teenage mothers are provided with specialist tuition to enable them to complete NVQ and GCSE qualifications. The E2E programme provides foundation skills for learners otherwise unable to study at higher levels. In 2002/03, 25 pupils from the high schools, at risk of disengagement, were successfully integrated into college vocational programmes; nearly half have now progressed to full-time courses.

32. Between them, the high schools provide appropriate opportunities for students to develop wider social, personal and practical skills through additional enrichment courses such as pre-driving lessons, environmental projects, outdoor pursuits and youth achievement awards. The Chamber of Commerce has recently established a pilot 'young chamber' with one school in order to support and develop young people's debating and citizenship skills. At the PRU, a wide range of enrichment activities is offered, including sailing and gardening. While opportunities for work experience are well organised, other aspects of work-related learning vary between schools and are not sufficiently well co-ordinated. Curriculum enrichment at the college is generally unsatisfactory, for example, there is no sports provision for students other than a weekly football club.

33. The partnerships developed between the college and work-based trainers are highly productive. For example, centre of vocational excellence (CoVE) status has been recently awarded for a hospitality partnership which enables good progression opportunities from level 1 to 4 and into employment. Students are able to develop high levels of practical skills as well as relevant NVQ awards. The number of learners at 16 progressing to modern apprenticeship schemes has fallen by nearly 25% over the past year. Training opportunities in some occupational areas remains underdeveloped, for example, retailing, accountancy and composites.

**Recommendations**

- g. The LEA and local LSC should continue to develop greater coherence in post-16 curriculum planning in order to minimise the incidence of small class sizes, widen choice and secure relevant progression opportunities.
- h. The college and the schools should continue to work together with a view to expanding opportunities to combine academic and vocational study.
- i. Activities to support work-related learning at Key Stage 4 should be further developed, including better use of employers and other training providers to give information to students on different progression routes.

**Guidance and support**

34. The Connexions service is well established on the Isle of Wight with targeted and universal services provided under sub-contracting arrangements. The service has been successful in reducing the number of learners for whom destinations are unknown from 507 to 138 over the last year. At the same time the NEET population has been reduced from 5.6% to 5.4%. A number of specific events and projects has been successfully co-ordinated to provide additional support and guidance for learners at risk of becoming not in education, employment or training. For example, during the summer, a programme of activities which includes a residential experience, is held for young people who have dropped out of school or who are unsure about continuing in learning. At the end of this year's programme, the majority continued in education or entered employment.

35. Every two years, the careers company, and now Connexions, organises a major learning and guidance event on the island involving local and national employers, schools, colleges, work-based learning providers and a variety of other organisations. Participation levels are high and the outcomes of evaluation are positive. In alternate years, events are organised specifically for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The service has also organised specialist workshops promoting careers in areas such as digital photography, motor vehicle and hairdressing.

36. Connexions information points are well established in each school and in the college. They provide a good range of general materials. Personal advisers regularly visit to conduct careers interviews and to provide advice. There is a clear agreement on the different activities that Connexions will undertake to support each school. This is reviewed effectively each year. Last year, 80% of Year 11 pupils received careers interviews from Connexions advisers. However, the information they receive about the range of post-16 options is insufficiently comprehensive. No complete directory of learning opportunities exists to inform young people and their parents. There is an assumption by some parents and schools that most learners will progress onto GCE AS and A-level courses and therefore do not require information about other education and training opportunities. For example, many young people and parents are unaware of work-based learning opportunities, including modern apprenticeship frameworks. Schools invite employers to talk about future prospects and careers. However, this is not as effective or as wide ranging as it could be. A recent external survey concluded that young people would welcome more formal contact and

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information about employers, colleges and training providers.

37. A small PRU for young people in Key Stages 3 and 4 is currently located in temporary accommodation at Carisbrooke. At the time of the inspection there were 20 pupils aged 14 to 16 on roll. Students undergo initial diagnostic assessment; the curriculum provides an appropriate balance of National Curriculum and practical enrichment activities. A structured assessment 'scorecard' is used to determine pupils' readiness for re-integration. The programme offered at the unit has been successful in re-integrating pupils into mainstream schools with the result that there are currently no permanent exclusions in the 14 to 16 age group. Support for the unit from the high schools is variable. Some provide schemes of work in English and mathematics to inform the teaching at the PRU, but this practice is not sufficiently consistent.

38. There is good pastoral care and personal support for young people at school, college and training providers. Some schools make effective use of older pupils acting as mentors to those who are younger; external accreditation is also provided for this role. In one school, there is an effective programme to develop young people's self-confidence and their ability to cope with problems such as bullying. In another school, pastoral heads and tutors move with their pupils at the end of each year to provide continuity in personal and academic support. In the recent college inspection report, guidance and support for students was judged to be good. The identification of additional support needs for full-time students and the provision of additional support were also judged to be effective. Work-based training providers routinely assess learners when they start on a programme in order to identify any additional support needs; support on personal issues is also good.

39. Information about learners' progress is not sufficiently shared within, or between, the different institutions. The procedures for monitoring the progress of pupils in schools are generally satisfactory, although there is some inconsistency of information sharing between subjects and teachers. Schools do not always receive enough information from the college on how pupils taking part in IFP are progressing. Learners do not always have access to their prior records of achievement when transferring between institutions. Not all work-based training providers monitor effectively the progress of learners during their programmes. Although Connexions provides initial information on learners who join E2E programmes and conducts regular reviews, the progress of learners leaving this programme is not monitored.

### ***Recommendations***

- j. The key stakeholders should work together to develop a more comprehensive directory of learning opportunities for young people at 16 and beyond.
- k. Providers of education and training should work together to ensure better sharing of information about individual learners both within and between different institutions.
- l. Schools should ensure that, where applicable, the PRU is provided with relevant schemes of work for pupils in core subjects in order to inform its teaching and support programme.

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## The quality of 14 to 19 education and training

### Achievement

40. Overall, GCSE achievements are unsatisfactory. The proportion of pupils who achieved five or more GCSEs at grades A\* to C in 2003 was 44.1%, well below the England average of 52.6% and below all of the island's LEA statistical neighbours. This pass rate has remained relatively static over the last three years. Similarly, the proportion of pupils achieving five or more GCSE A\* to G grades is below national and statistical neighbour averages. Three schools, Carisbrooke, Cowes and Ryde, demonstrated improved performance in 2003, but at Sandown, the proportion of pupils who achieved five or more GCSEs at A\* to C fell from 47% in 2002 to 42% in 2003 and for Medina in 2003, the percentage was 37.8%. The gap between area and national averages in some GCSE core subjects is narrower. For example, in double award science, the schools' A\* to C pass rate averaged 51% in 2003 compared with the national figure of 52.7%.

41. Raising the achievements of vulnerable groups is appropriately recognised as a priority by the LEA in its EDP. Owing to the small number of pupils in this group, for example, there are fewer than 20 pupils in public care, achievement figures are volatile. Nevertheless, performance in 2003 declined significantly compared to the previous year. For example, the proportion achieving one or more GCSE or equivalent passes at grades A\* to G fell from 57% in 2002 to 33% in 2003.

42. At GCE A level, performance in schools is closer to national and statistical neighbour figures. Pass rates averaged 95% in 2003, matching the national rate of 95.4%; in 2002, performance was 2% above the national figure. On the measure of University and Colleges Admission Services (UCAS) points per entry, Sandown and Ryde schools, with nearly half of all the candidates, perform above the England average, the other students perform below. Measures of GCE AS and A-level achievement which compare students' predicted grades with their GCSE performance showed, in 2003, that they performed in line with expectations at Medina and Sandown, but slightly below in the other three schools. At Carisbrooke, the performance of girls was significantly below expectations, whilst at Cowes and Ryde it was mainly boys who underperformed. In previous years, value added performance has been broadly in line with expectations. Advanced vocational performance in the schools is good, although with relatively small numbers of candidates. For example, three schools achieved 100% pass rates in 2003 with the other two achieving rates above 90%.

43. Post-16 completion rates at the schools are satisfactory for GCE A level; they are over 90% at three of the schools, although at Cowes the figure dropped to 70% in 2002/03. Retention rates in vocational subjects are more volatile but with small numbers of students. For example, in 2002/03, those for AVCE contrasted sharply, with Ryde and Medina achieving 100%, but in Cowes and Carisbrooke figures of only 35% and 54% respectively were recorded. At Carisbrooke, a retention rate of only 58% is recorded for General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) intermediate programmes; at Cowes this stands at 100%.

44. Achievements at the college, for students aged 16 to 18, have improved greatly over the last three years to a level where all the headline rates are now well above national benchmarks. For example, at level 1, with over 1,000 enrolments, the pass rate increased

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from 60% in 2001 to 81% in 2003. This latest figure compares very favourably with a national pass rate of 71%. Similarly, at levels 2 and 3, the pass rates at the college in 2003 are close to 80%. Pass rates for some qualification types are particularly high, for example, those on GNVQ awards at levels 1 to 3 average close to 90% in 2003. Improvements in retention rates are also significant and, at levels 1 and 2, are above national benchmarks; at level 3 they remain below the national figure and declined in 2002/03 compared with the previous year.

45. High school attendance has remained static over the last three years and, at 91%, is close to local LSC and national averages. The high schools and the LEA recognise there is a need to strengthen measures to improve attendance and reduce levels of unauthorised absence. Attendance during the college inspection was 84%, well above the sector average of 78% for 2002/03. This also represents a considerable improvement over historical levels of attendance which, in previous inspection reports, averaged below 80%.

46. Over 50% of the 426 trainees aged 16 to 18 on foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships (AMAs) recruited during 2001/02 left before completing their programmes. Retention rates were lowest in the occupational areas of business administration, care and hospitality. In the following year, retention rates improved significantly in hospitality with, for example, no students leaving early from the AMA; retention rates remain unsatisfactory in business administration. Framework success rates on modern apprenticeships in the 2002/03 contract year vary considerably between providers. They are good at the Hospitality and Training Partnership and School of Food and Wine; overall they are comparable to national rates.

#### Quality of education and training

47. According to the most recent Ofsted high school inspection reports, the quality of teaching at Key Stage 4 is good in two schools and satisfactory in the remaining three. The best teaching is characterised by good subject knowledge on the part of teachers, sound planning with clear learning objectives and appropriately high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour. Some of the identified weaknesses include teaching which does not meet the needs of the full ability range, ineffective management of pupils' behaviour and insufficient homework. The high schools have regular programmes for monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning, but these have not yet led to significantly better standards in GCSE achievements.

48. In sixth forms, inspection reports judge teaching to be at least good, and very good in two schools. Key strengths include effective use of schemes of work to support well-planned lessons and learning objectives which are shared with, and understood by, students. There is a good balance of activities led by staff and those which promote independent learning on the part of students. Relationships between teachers and students are good with high expectations of success. On occasion, tasks are not always matched to the different abilities of students and assessment procedures do not sufficiently identify and rectify weaknesses in students' written work. In the recent inspection of the college, teaching for students aged 16 to 18 was judged satisfactory or better in 96% of lessons, with 69% graded good or better, well above the sector average. The highest grades were awarded in hairdressing and beauty therapy, foundation programmes and humanities. Good use is made

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of IT to support learning in the schools although this was identified as a weakness in the recent inspection of sixth form provision at Cowes High School. IT is under-utilised in some of the other high schools.

49. Inspection evidence from the providers of work-based learning indicates that training is satisfactory overall. Some good teaching was observed on E2E programmes. The practical skills of learners are developed well in most areas of learning through appropriate work placements and good off-the-job training. There have been some marked improvements in the teaching of key skills, especially to support learners in preparing for external tests. In some occupational areas, however, on-the-job and off-the-job training are poorly co-ordinated. The assessment of work by trainees is not always timely, resulting in learners not making sufficient progress on their programmes. Trainees' additional needs in literacy and numeracy are not always well supported.

50. Recent inspection reports make reference to the promotion of educational inclusion. For example, at the college and at two of the high schools, learning support assistants work effectively with students who have additional needs. At Ryde, however, this support was judged to be less effective. Extensive provision for literacy and numeracy is made across the curriculum. In the high schools, literacy and numeracy are particularly well taught at Ryde, but at Medina numeracy skills are insufficiently developed.

#### Resources

51. The sale of estate to a commercial concern and significant investment by the local LSC is enabling the college to make significant improvements to its accommodation, including a number of specialist teaching facilities. Accommodation in some specialist areas remains unsatisfactory, for example, those in construction. Accommodation at the high schools is mostly good according to recent inspection reports. Some facilities are appropriately shared with community groups. For example, there is good collaboration between the college and 'Quay Arts'; one school has a 'Sure Start' base to encourage disengaged young people back into learning. The provision of learning resources is satisfactory. The college has very good ICT facilities. At Cowes High School some subjects in the sixth form, for example, art and design, are insufficiently resourced.

52. In the schools and in the college, staffing levels are generally adequate and most teachers are appropriately qualified. However, staff turnover and levels of absence through illness are relatively high in the schools. Students at the college with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported effectively by qualified and experienced learning support assistants. The LEA provides a broad range of central training for the professional development of its staff, although participation levels are sometimes low. Sandown High School provides initial teacher training and has very good arrangements for supporting newly qualified teachers. The effective training of assessors in a number of work-based learning providers is a strength.

#### *Recommendations*

m. Schools should ensure that GCSE achievements improve to match at least the standards of the LEA's statistical neighbours.

- n. The LEA should ensure that the achievements of vulnerable groups improve significantly from their current level.
- o. Measures of GCE AS and A-level achievement, which compare students' grades with previous GCSE results, should be used more systematically with action taken to address under-performance.