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IN EDUCATION

**INSPECTION OF  
REDBRIDGE  
LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY**

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**OFFICE OF HER MAJESTY'S CHIEF INSPECTOR OF SCHOOLS  
in conjunction with the  
AUDIT COMMISSION**

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## INTRODUCTION

1. This inspection of Redbridge local education authority (LEA) was carried out by OFSTED in conjunction with the Audit Commission under section 38 of the Education Act 1997. The inspection used the *Framework for the Inspection of Local Education Authorities (December 2001)*. The inspection focused on the effectiveness of the LEA's work to support school improvement. The inspection also took account of the Local Government Act 1999, insofar as it relates to work undertaken by the LEA on best value.

2. The inspection was based on a range of material, which included self-evaluation undertaken by the LEA, and data, some of which was provided by the LEA. That material also included school inspection information; HMI monitoring reports and audit reports; documentation from, and discussions with, LEA officers and members; focus groups of headteachers and governors and staff in other departments at that local authority. Other agencies and LEA partners submitted written evidence of participation and joint working, and participated in interviews. In addition, the inspection team considered the earlier OFSTED/Audit Commission report on this LEA (published in October 2000). A questionnaire, seeking views on aspects of the work of the LEA, was circulated to 73 schools, and the inspection team considered its results. The response rate to the questionnaire was 67 per cent.

## COMMENTARY

3. Redbridge is a suburban community in north east London with relatively low levels of unemployment and broadly average levels of disadvantage. However, there are significant pockets of deprivation. Minority ethnic communities comprise almost half of the local population and this diversity is reflected in the school population with some 40 per cent of pupils having English as an additional language. Redbridge schools are popular, particularly at secondary level, with a significant proportion of pupils coming from outside of the borough. There is pressure on school places.

4. The attainment of pupils on entry to full-time education in Redbridge schools is in line with national averages but declining. Pupil performance at Key Stage 1 is similar to national averages but rates of improvement are low. Both performance and rates of improvement of pupils increase as they progress through the key stages. The aggregate performance of Redbridge schools in GCSE examinations is amongst the best in the country. However, performance post-16 falls back to the national average.

5. Previously, inspectors concluded that schools achieved results despite problems in the management of both the corporate centre and the education service, which had reduced the effectiveness of the LEA's support. The lack of effective leadership given by members, weakness in management, together with poor communication at all levels, meant that education expertise did not always inform important budgetary decisions and headteachers felt excluded from decision making. The absence of an effective partnership with headteachers and lack of an articulated and shared vision for education in the borough meant, inevitably, that the Education Development Plan provided an inadequate basis for the LEA's school improvement strategy. Notwithstanding these weaknesses, the quality of many of the services on the ground was satisfactory, however their overall effectiveness was unsatisfactory.

6. In the eighteen months since the last inspection almost all LEA functions have improved. Progress has been greatest where the LEA was previously weakest. The Education Development Plan sets out a sound and innovative strategy for school improvement. The majority of services are at least satisfactory with the following judged to be good:

- support for literacy in schools;
- support for numeracy in schools;
- support for schools and teaching of pupils at Key Stage 3;
- the expertise of staff to support school improvement;
- support for admissions;
- support for health, safety and child protection within schools;
- support for children in public care; and
- the leadership of senior officers.

7. Few aspects of the LEA are now judged to be unsatisfactory. The most significant weakness is that the council's performance management arrangements are underdeveloped. The pace of improvement in support for pupils with special educational needs and promoting social inclusion has been slower than elsewhere

across the council and in three functions, previously judged satisfactory, the remaining weaknesses now outweigh strengths. The following services are judged to be unsatisfactory:

- structures for promoting continuous improvement including best value;
- support for gifted and talented pupils;
- the discharge of statutory obligations in relation to SEN;
- systems for demonstrating value for money in special educational needs; and
- provision for educating pupils out of school.

8. Officers and members have successfully addressed almost all of the recommendations of the last inspection. In particular the fundamental change in attitude demanded of officers and members has largely taken place. Throughout the period the chief executive and other members of the management board have worked hard to support improvement in education. Members of all three political parties have given a very high priority to education. This has been reflected in the more constructive and balanced attention given to education in strategic decision making and in the protection given to education in budget processes. An increasingly effective partnership between headteachers, senior officers and members is reflected in the articulation of a coherent and shared vision for education, much improved consultation with headteachers and arrangements for them to influence budget decisions. However, scrutiny arrangements under modernised member structures are not fully effective.

9. The strengthening of senior management structures within education services has been critical in providing the strategic and operational capacity to support improvement. Headteachers' and school governors' growing confidence in the LEA is attributed to the quality, enthusiasm and strong leadership of the director of education and lifelong learning and the new senior management team. Service development has rightly been focused on improving the strategy and support for school improvement but key weaknesses have been addressed and secure foundations for further improvement have been laid in other areas.

10. The leadership of the senior officers is good, plans for further improvements are clear and soundly based and have the support of headteachers. The LEA has the capacity to address the recommendations of this report and to further improve on its already highly satisfactory performance.

## **SECTION 1: THE LEA STRATEGY FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT**

### **Context**

11. Redbridge is a predominantly suburban area of north east London with a population of 235,000 and a school population of about 43,000. Unemployment rates are falling and are low compared with regional and national averages and there are high levels of home ownership. Socio-economically Redbridge is broadly average, though with some variation: a quarter of its wards are among the wealthiest in England, while two have relatively high levels of deprivation.

12. Entitlement to free school meals is in line with national averages at both primary and secondary levels. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational need (SEN) is well below the national figures at both primary and secondary pupils and the proportion of pupils with statements of SEN educated in mainstream schools is increasing. Minority ethnic communities comprised just under half the total population in the 1991 census, which is much higher than the national average. Ethnic, religious and cultural diversity is a particular feature of the school population with pupils of Indian heritage being the largest single group. Approximately 40 per cent of pupils have English as an additional language (EAL) and there are 50 different first languages. There is a very small proportion of Traveller children. Over 2000 refugee children attend schools in the borough, a rise of more than 50 per cent over the past two years. The number of pupils admitted to schools during the school year remains high in both primary and secondary schools with some schools experiencing an annual rate of over 25 per cent compared with the borough average of 6 per cent.

13. The authority maintains 51 primary schools, of which eight are infant schools and seven are junior schools. There are 17 secondary schools; two of these are grammar schools, five have specialist status and four are beacon schools. The authority also maintains five special schools and a pupil referral unit. The percentage of under-fives on the roll of the LEA's primary schools is 60 per cent. All secondary schools have their own sixth form. Some 56 per cent of pupils stay on in their schools, which is more than twice the national average. Redbridge schools are large, particularly in the primary sector and at sixth form. They are popular both with Redbridge residents and with parents living in neighbouring boroughs. Overall, about 11 per cent of pupils live outside the borough, with secondary schools having over 17 per cent of such pupils. Pupil numbers have grown steadily in recent years in both primary and secondary schools and occupancy rates are high, particularly in secondary schools.

### **Performance**

14. The attainment of pupils on entry to full-time education is in line with the national average. However, there has been some decline over the past two years, particularly in language and literacy.

15. Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 is broadly in line with national and statistical neighbour averages. However, the rate of improvement in attainment

since the last inspection is below the national average and well below that of statistical neighbours. The proportion of pupils achieving Level 4 or above at the end of Key Stage 2 is broadly in line with, and in some cases above the national average and that for statistical neighbours for the three core subjects (English, mathematics and science). The rate of improvement since the last inspection is similar to the national trend and that for statistical neighbours.

16. At the end of Key Stage 3 the proportion of pupils achieving Level 5 or above for mathematics and science is higher than the national averages and in line for English. It is above the average for statistical neighbours for all three subjects. Rates of improvement since the last inspection are at least in line with and generally above national trends and those for statistical neighbours. Results take a marked upturn at GCSE, with pupils performing well above the national and statistical neighbour averages for five or more A\*-C, five or more A\*-G and one or more A\*-G grades. The five or more A\*-C figure improved at almost twice the national average over the past two years. In 2001 all schools were placed in the upper quartile on the five or more A\*-C indicator. The results of pupils entered for two or more subjects at A level are in line with national and statistical neighbour averages as is the average points score. At all key stages girls generally do better than boys but the difference is a little less than that found nationally. For the most part the achievement of ethnic minority pupils is similar to that for all Redbridge pupils, except for Key Stage 2 English where attainment is significantly lower. While Afro Caribbean and Pakistani boys generally underperform compared to the average for all Redbridge pupils, their attainment is in line with or better than national averages for Afro Caribbean and Pakistani boys.

17. Inspection findings have broadly reflected this picture for attainment and quality of education in secondary schools. More secondary schools were judged to be good or very good than in statistical neighbours or nationally. Since the previous inspection, two schools have been placed in special measures and one has been judged to have serious weaknesses.

18. Rates of attendance, compared with those nationally and those of statistical neighbours, are similar in primary schools and better in secondary schools. Unauthorised absence is higher than the national average in primary schools, and increasing at Key Stage 1, but is lower in secondary schools. The rate of permanent exclusions has been lower than national and statistical neighbour rates in recent years, both in primary and secondary schools.

## **Funding**

19. In the last inspection, funding overall was judged to be satisfactory, although with a caveat concerning the level of spending on primary schools in particular. Funding continues to be satisfactory.

20. Although spending on education only reaches 98.1 per cent of the standard spending assessment, Redbridge has highlighted education as a priority over the last two years. The council has passed on to schools the full education SSA increase in both years and has protected the service from cuts that have been applied in all other areas.



	<b>Standard spending assessment for Education £m</b>	<b>Net expenditure on education £m</b>	<b>Expenditure as per cent of standard spending assessment</b>
<b>1998/99</b>	110.0	105.4	95.7
<b>1999/00</b>	118.4	116.6	98.5
<b>2000/01</b>	125.9	123.8	98.3
<b>2001/02</b>	134.2	131.5	98.1

21. Expenditure per pupil for primary and secondary pupils is below standard spending assessment and the outer London average. However, for under-fives and at post-16 per pupil expenditure exceeds the standard spending assessment. The council has made a decision to direct any additional funding into primary provision.

22. Capital expenditure decreased substantially between 1998/99 and 1999/00 when borrowing and revenue contributions were cut. While there has been a reversal over the past two years, and expenditure has almost doubled, expenditure per pupil remains below that of statistical neighbours, outer London and national averages.

23. At 87 per cent, Redbridge delegated more of the local schools budget than similar authorities and nationally in 2001/02. This has increased even further in 2002/03 to 88.2 per cent. The LEA has also taken up all Standards Fund grants available to it and has devolved almost 95 per cent to schools, some 18 per cent higher than similar authorities or nationally, thus maximising resources directly available to schools. The LEA has been successful in obtaining external funding from a variety of grant sources including New Deal for Schools, New Opportunities Fund and the Private Finance Initiative.

24. Redbridge LEA's expenditure on centrally provided services is above the outer London average in strategic management, and well above in access, but it spends less than other outer London authorities on school improvement. Overall expenditure on SEN is well below the average for outer London boroughs and national averages. This is in part due to the fact that funding for pupils with statements of special educational needs is delegated to schools.

### **Council structure**

25. At the time of the last inspection, no party had overall control. A modernised council structure had not been introduced. The key weaknesses were the poor sense of partnership between members, senior officers and headteachers and the lack of transparency in decision making. Furthermore, the post of director of education, lifelong learning had only recently been upgraded to report directly to the chief executive.

26. At the time of this inspection no party had overall control of the council with Labour, Conservatives and Liberal Democrats having 28, 23 and 9 seats respectively. There were also two independent Labour councillors. At the May 2002 election, the Conservatives gained a majority of seats. Shortly after the last

inspection a modernised local government structure was implemented. Currently there is a cabinet, which is headed by the Council leader, and there are seven area committees and five scrutiny committees. The cabinet consists of members of the majority party and all of the chairs of scrutiny committees come from this party.

27. The director of education and lifelong learning has continued to report to the chief executive and education is central to council strategy making. Over the past year the education management structure has been strengthened with the appointment of three new second tier posts.

28. The weaknesses in the relationship between schools and the LEA have now been overcome. While the changes to officer and member structure have been important, the main vehicle for improvement has been the establishment of the schools partnership. This has provided a forum for open debate and dialogue between headteachers, school governors, senior officers and members and has much reduced, but not eliminated, headteachers' mistrust of the council.

### **The LEA strategy for school improvement**

29. The Education Development Plan 2002 to 2007 was submitted to the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in January. Although there were some deficiencies in the success criteria and clarity of activity in this original document it was judged to be satisfactory with strengths outweighing weaknesses. The LEA recognised the shortcomings and the amended Education Development Plan, from which the LEA is now working, is of good quality and well targeted to secure continuous improvement. The LEA has made good progress since the last inspection and the weaknesses of the 1999 to 2002 Education Development Plan have been rigorously addressed.

30. Priorities are clearly articulated and draw effectively on the audit of local need as well as national research. In addition to national priorities for raising attainment, tackling underachievement and developing self-improving schools, the LEA has identified two relevant local priorities. These emphasise pedagogy, school self-review and the recruitment and retention of teachers. Other cross-cutting activities and information and communication technology (ICT) are incorporated imaginatively into the plan.

31. The audit is efficient and provides a sound foundation for action. A wide range of partners was involved in a thorough and systematic consultation process. Responses have been positive and the school survey reflects a high level of agreement with the selected priorities. There are clear links to other relevant plans and strategies, particularly social inclusion.

32. The LEA's targets for 2004 are very challenging, despite most being at the bottom of the range provided by the DfES. Given past rates of improvement, there are reasonable prospects of the targets at Key Stages 3 and 4 being met. However, prospects for Key Stage 2 are less secure and action to improve performance at this key stage features prominently in Education Development Plan activity.

33. Activities for the current year are now detailed and ambitious. Time-scales are demanding, but reflect an appropriate sense of urgency. Success criteria have been sharpened and the lack of precision in the earlier version is rarely evident in the working document. The dissemination of good practice features in almost all priorities. The Education Development Plan is costed carefully.

34. Previously an overwhelming lack of school ownership and commitment to the Education Development Plan inhibited successful implementation. In the past year relationships between schools and the LEA have improved greatly. The 1999 to 2002 Education Development Plan was reviewed and more relevant action was incorporated into the post-inspection action plan that has driven the LEA's strategy for improvement over the past twelve months. As a result satisfactory progress has been made in meeting the targets within this first EDP. The 2002 to 2007 Education Development Plan is already being implemented with good pace and rigour and there are few weaknesses in current systems.

35. The implementation of the Education Development Plan is very well led. Improved consultation, effective communication, an emphasis on teaching and learning, and the clear direction given by senior LEA staff are key features of the planning and implementation processes that were not evident previously. These have created a strong school improvement strategy. The programme of intervention and support in schools causing concern is making a clear difference and some good progress is being made in moving schools out of categories of concern. Much specific action within the current Education Development Plan is already underway with evidence of impact in the areas of post-16, Key Stage 3 strategy and minority ethnic achievement.

36. Systems for review and evaluation are rigorous and monitoring roles are clearly outlined. Performance management systems have been put recently in place to secure progress in meeting individual targets. A system of regular reporting to the senior management team and to the scrutiny panel of progress on the Education Development Plan has been in place for the last 18 months. Schools are keen to be involved in these well-structured monitoring and evaluation procedures and consultation groups are rightly being used for such purposes.

### **The extent to which the LEA targets its resources to priorities**

37. At the last inspection, the extent to which the LEA targets its resources to priorities was judged as poor with significant weaknesses. Budget planning did not facilitate a clear and rational approach to resource management and overarching priorities were not clearly articulated. Reactive financial decisions made it difficult for senior officers to implement plans effectively. Previous recommendations focused on the need to align resources with the identified priority of education and engage headteachers in this process.

38. The targeting of resources to priorities has improved and is now satisfactory. Spending on education, whilst not at the level of the standard spending assessment, has been protected when all other council services have been subject to cuts. The full standard spending assessment increase in funding has been passed on to schools through in the last two years. The LEA's budgetary control is good. The

LEA has identified its vision and strategic priorities and has allocated resources to achieving them, although this process is more evident in the short-term and less well developed in the medium-term where links between budgets and priorities still lack detail. Its use of capital receipts for revenue spending is not supported by a detailed longer-term strategy. Consultation between members, officers and schools on priorities, judged to be weak in the last inspection, has improved and is beginning to be effective. However, an overdue root and branch funding formula review is only now starting.

### **Promoting continuous improvement, including Best Value**

39. At the time of the last inspection, the extent to which the LEA had strategies in place for the implementation of Best Value was judged satisfactory. However, schools' involvement in and understanding of the process were weaknesses.

40. The approach to continuous improvement, including Best Value, is now unsatisfactory. The impact of the council's Best Value review programme has been limited. Reviews have focused on process and been insufficiently wide-ranging or challenging and have rarely prompted significant service improvement. These weaknesses are reflected in the commentary on the LEA's review of early years provision which is included later in this report. The council has amended its programme and in future there will be fewer, more cross-cutting themed reviews. The external auditor gave the Best Value Performance Plan an unqualified opinion, but concluded that a council-wide cultural change was needed if Best Value was to be integrated into day to day management arrangements. However, there are some encouraging developments, most notably the effective use of a Best Value approach in re-organising the inspection and advisory service. Consultation processes, particularly those with schools, have improved greatly since the last inspection.

41. The education service's application of the council's performance management system is in its infancy and is not, as yet, effective. There is insufficient evidence of a consistent approach. Links between corporate objectives, education service objectives and service plans have improved. Further links to team plans and individual workplans are underdeveloped. The LEA uses national performance indicators to measure its performance but has yet to develop an agreed set of local performance indicators. Members of the education and leisure scrutiny committee are unclear about their responsibilities and are not provided with incisive information on costs, activity and outcome to enable effective judgements to be made about value for money. Monitoring and challenge are inconsistent and overall insufficient.

42. Headteachers and governing bodies are insufficiently supported either in becoming effective and discerning purchasers or in relating the impact of all resource management decisions to pupil outcomes. Initial governor training on Best Value will be available later this year.

## **Recommendations**

### **In order to improve the council's approach to continuous improvement:**

- the performance management framework should be consistently and effectively implemented across all elements of the education service; and
- detailed guidance and support should be offered to school managers in implementing all aspects of Best Value principles.

## **SECTION 2: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT**

### **Summary of effectiveness of LEA's support for school improvement**

43. School improvement services were judged to be an unsatisfactory aspect of the LEA in the last inspection. The recommendations made in that inspection have been addressed. The new systems that have been put in place now create a highly satisfactory framework for monitoring, challenge and intervention. Good progress has been made and the leadership, deployment of personnel and strategic planning are all satisfactory, with few weaknesses.

44. Although the advisory team is organised to work with schools on school improvement issues in inverse proportion to schools' success, not all other LEA services are as clearly focused in the support that they give, for example, across the range of management services. Not all of the advisory team have yet been appointed and, therefore, the current capacity of officers is stretched. Evidence of impact is limited at this early stage, but there are some notable examples of which the LEA can be rightly proud. However, the quality of school improvement work is sound and overall the LEA offers highly satisfactory value for money in this area.

### **Monitoring, challenge and intervention**

45. These functions were areas of weakness at the time of the last inspection. Recommendations, which include making the monitoring procedures clearer to schools and further developing the procedures together with headteachers and governors, have been addressed and significant improvement has been made by the LEA in these functions, so that they are now highly satisfactory with few weaknesses. The monitoring, challenge and intervention processes are clearly defined and well described in guidance. They are understood by officers, school senior managers and governors. Clear procedures have been put into place to identify the support needed by schools to address areas of weakness. The LEA closely involved headteachers in agreeing the new monitoring process. Advisers work well with headteachers to agree the strengths and areas for development in their schools.

### **The effectiveness of the LEA's work in monitoring and challenging schools**

46. As a result of the LEA's recent work in these areas, there has been a sensible decision to place schools into categories depending on their success. Headteachers understand how the LEA makes the judgement about in which of the six categories a school is placed, and the resulting level of support that they will receive from the LEA's school improvement service. Headteachers rightly judge that these aspects of the LEA's work are satisfactory. Governors are increasingly included in the outcomes of the monitoring procedure. The extent to which the LEA's support to schools is focused on areas of greatest need is satisfactory.

47. The head of school improvement and lifelong learning offers good leadership. The new team of advisers is focusing on monitoring and challenging schools to improve. Although the systems and personnel are new, there is already evidence that the approach is having a beneficial impact on school improvement. For example

all headteachers interviewed were clear about the level of support they would receive from the advisory service, depending on the needs of their school.

48. The target-setting process, which was used for the first time in autumn term 2001, has enabled advisers to provide necessary challenge to schools where proposed targets that had been set were too low. The LEA produces a wide range of performance data and sound use is made of these in the target setting process. This has resulted in schools' aggregated targets matching the overall LEA targets. Recent data developments include value-added data for secondary schools and information about groups of schools so that they can compare their performance. The LEA has addressed successfully the recommendations in the last inspection by gaining agreement from headteachers for development of analyses of data and establishing clear protocols to govern school expectations and data sharing arrangements.

49. Systems for aligning monitoring and support activity to school needs have improved and are consistent with the DfES Code of Practice on LEA - School Relations. Schools are clear about the support that they can buy from the LEA and the amount of core adviser time available to schools is clearly set out in the team's work plan. Successful schools are increasingly being used to share good practice. Good use is made of serving headteachers, Beacon Schools, and other effective staff to support school improvement work. The LEA sees this as an important strategy to strengthen its work and ensure that recent school experience is available to the advisory team. The LEA is committed to self-managing schools and to ensuring that the way support is offered does not undermine this principle. However, brokerage of school improvement services is currently underdeveloped and confined mainly to professional development providers.

### **The effectiveness of the LEA's work with under-performing schools**

50. This was judged to be effective in the last inspection and is still highly satisfactory with few weaknesses. Schools in the two categories causing concern receive significantly more support than schools that have fewer areas of weakness. The system is new, but evidence from OFSTED inspections and LEA reviews suggest that the LEA has an increasingly accurate picture of the strengths and areas of concern in its schools. The LEA makes good use of this information to target support and address areas of weakness.

51. Currently the LEA has one school in special measures, one school has serious weaknesses and there are a further six that cause the LEA concern. After the last inspection, while the necessary re-organisation of the advisory team was underway, the LEA's effectiveness in supporting schools causing concern was reduced. During this period the number of schools being judged to require special measures or having serious weaknesses increased, but the overall percentage of schools in these categories remained below that of similar authorities and the national average. Over the past two terms, the LEA's support for schools causing concern has been increasingly focused and specific. Officers provide good support and clear advice to school senior managers and governors when they are taking difficult decisions in competency procedures. A range of LEA officers worked effectively within one school to assist its removal out of the special measures

category in 15 months. Overall there has been significant progress in reducing the number of schools causing the LEA concern since the last inspection.

52. The Education Development Plan has a challenging, but achievable, target that the LEA will have no schools judged by OFSTED to be causing concern by December 2003. The implementation, from this term, of the LEA's school self-evaluation scheme will enhance monitoring by enabling headteachers, governors and LEA officers to have a clearer shared understanding of a school's strengths and weaknesses. There are good systems in place to ensure that senior officers in the LEA are regularly informed about the progress schools are making. Reports to the scrutiny committee also ensure that elected members are kept informed about schools causing concern. Both of these processes help to secure the importance of school improvement work as central to the work of the LEA.

### **Support for literacy**

53. This aspect was judged to be good at the time of the previous inspection. No detailed fieldwork was carried out in this area. The director judges that support remains good and schools agree with this assessment. Some innovative practice is underway which will further challenge teachers' expectations and improve pedagogical skills and the inspection judgement therefore remains the same.

### **Support for numeracy**

54. Support for numeracy was judged to have more strengths than weaknesses at the time of the previous inspection. The support has improved and now is good. The National Numeracy Strategy has been implemented successfully since the last inspection and with the LEA's decision to appoint an additional consultant in February 2002 the level of support for schools has increased significantly. A recommendation in the last inspection to improve the quality of support to secondary schools has been addressed effectively with the appointment of a consultant as part of the implementation of the new strategy to support for raising standards at Key Stage 3. In the school survey, headteachers judge the overall support to be at least satisfactory and mathematics coordinators speak very positively about the quality of support that they receive.

55. Standards at Key Stage 1 have risen steadily since the last inspection and are broadly in line with the national average. The LEA is well placed to achieve the targets it has set for 2004. At Key Stage 2 LEA results are similar to the national average. However, they dipped in 2001, in line with the national fall in standards, and as a result the LEA's 2002 target will be very challenging to achieve. The numeracy team is working hard with schools to target support and ensure that all pupils achieve their best. Those schools supported intensively last year, showed a 5.6 per cent improvement in pupils achieving the required level of attainment or above, compared with a fall of nearly one per cent across the LEA. The numeracy team's confidence that there will be significant improvement across the LEA this year is based on good analyses of pupils' achievements in targeted schools, which allows effective support to be focused on pupils who are close to achieving Level 4.



56. Although the LEA has been without a mathematics adviser for much of this academic year, good temporary arrangements have been made to co-ordinate and plan the support offered to schools. This has placed a pressure on the capacity of the LEA to fulfil its responsibilities, particularly in strategic planning of support and training in schools. However, the overall quality of support to schools has still been good. The numeracy team is enthusiastic about its work, has good knowledge and expertise in the subject and works hard to respond to schools. The Education Development Plan clearly focuses on continuing to raise standards in numeracy.

57. Sound use has been made of leading mathematics teachers to support schools in their work. In addition, the numeracy consultants have produced helpful guidance, which has been well received by schools. In particular, medium term planning guidance and an increasing use of performance data in target setting have enabled the support to be better focused on groups of pupils and areas of mathematics. A useful analysis of pupils' National Curriculum and optional test papers for pupils in years 3, 4 and 5 also helped the team focus on curriculum areas that need greatest input. The numeracy team has provided good quality and focused training.

58. Sound links are developing with other LEA teams, which enables consultants to work together on a range of initiatives. The team works closely and effectively with their literacy colleagues, often jointly providing training courses especially those for classroom assistants. A strengthening link with the information and communications technology team is developing, as is work with the minority ethnic achievement team.

### **Support for information and communication technology (ICT)**

59. This LEA function was judged as an area of weakness in the last inspection. There has been improvement in this area of work and the support now offered is satisfactory. The recommendations made in the last inspection included providing better advice and support to teachers, and improving the dialogue with schools on ICT development planning. These have mostly been addressed and are likely to be fully met when the LEA has gone through its audit of all schools by the end of this term.

60. The lack of a complete and detailed knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses within schools means LEA support is currently not well targeted and that some schools may receive little or no support from the LEA. Nevertheless, headteachers generally rated support as satisfactory in responses to the school survey, and subject leaders are positive about the support they have received. A full ICT school self-evaluation process, launched this term, aims to provide the LEA with a better basis for aligning support to need. The newly appointed adviser for ICT is visiting all schools to gain good knowledge of their strengths and weaknesses.

61. The Education Development Plan includes ICT as a major area for development throughout most of the priorities to support schools to raise attainment. The actions identified are appropriately focused on developing ICT use as a tool for pupils to support learning across the curriculum. To this end, there are related plans to update and improve the schools' interactive web-site, so that it can act as a forum

for discussion and also where teachers can access information about teaching and learning. In agreement with headteachers, the LEA has produced a new strategy that usefully combines administration and curriculum strands of ICT, which will improve co-ordination. The newly appointed curriculum ICT adviser is addressing the current confusion in schools about whom to contact for particular support.

### **Support for raising standards at Key Stage 3**

62. The support for raising standards at Key Stage 3 is good and the start of the strategy has been implemented effectively. There is a clear plan for supporting secondary schools to raise standards, which is articulated well by the strategy manager who offers good leadership in this area. He also manages the primary literacy strategy, which facilitates close liaison between consultants in implementing these two national strategies. The LEA's work in this area is clearly set out in the current EDP. This year, the LEA appropriately decided to support most secondary schools in developing teaching and learning at Key Stage 3, to ensure that the strategy was introduced successfully across the LEA. The team is now looking at data and other information to target resources to support schools during the next year.

63. Standards at Key Stage 3 have been rising steadily since the last inspection, particularly in mathematics and science. Standards are above those of similar authorities and the national average. The targets set for 2004 are challenging, particularly in ICT where a 14 per cent rise in those pupils achieving Level 5 or above, between 2001 and 2004, is required.

64. The LEA has taken the initiative in preparing schools for the strategy and ensuring that support is available to them. A headteachers' conference was held early in 2001 to introduce the strategy and an ICT consultant was appointed a term early at the LEA's expense. This foresight, together with the clarity of the planning and the high calibre of the consultants appointed so far, puts the authority in a strong position to ensure that good quality training and support are available to schools in the coming years.

65. Good links have been made with the primary phase strategies and the team is drawing on these to support teaching and learning in Key Stage 3. There is a valuable emphasis on transition issues and with the increasing availability of good pupil level data, tracking pupils from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 has become a priority for the LEA. A number of promising initiatives are promoting this area of work.

### **Support for ethnic minority groups including Travellers**

66. Support for pupils from minority ethnic groups was judged to be good overall in the last inspection although there was little provision for Traveller pupils, and therefore this aspect was weak. Support for minority ethnic and Traveller pupils is currently highly satisfactory. These services are well led and there is a clear focus on improving access and raising standards for all pupils. There are few significant weaknesses, the most important being the impact of the council practice of denying

access and entitlement to education for Traveller children on unauthorised encampments.

67. The service employs many of the teachers that work in schools. A positive feature is that all new staff appointed to the service are offered a training programme, recognised to be of high quality, during their first year. Other training opportunities offered to all staff supplement this. About three-quarters of schools buy into this service. Money is appropriately delegated to schools using a formula agreed by headteachers and the LEA. The central team maintains close links with staff in schools and the support is valued. However, systems to monitor the impact of the service on outcomes are underdeveloped. In order to promote school autonomy in this area the LEA is about to consult with schools about alternative ways of supporting minority ethnic pupils by ceasing buy back arrangements.

68. The Education Development Plan has an appropriate focus on raising standards for ethnic minority and Traveller children. For some groups the targets are very challenging. For example, at Key Stage 2, the LEA will need to support black African pupils to raise their achievement by 16 per cent between 2001 and 2004. However, a weakness is that the 2004 targets set for minority ethnic groups, have not been based on pupil level data, but are an estimate of what could be achieved, based on current LEA level performance data.

69. A number of useful and important projects have been undertaken to target support and research into the issues that contribute to underperformance of certain groups of pupils. These include the black pupils' achievement project, the Windsor Fellowship mentoring scheme for gifted and talented Year 10 and 11 black pupils and raising the achievement of Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils, all of which have had some success in raising the aspirations of pupils and their parents.

70. Over the last two terms the Traveller service has experienced some staffing discontinuity and illness, which has inevitably, had some impact upon its work. Nevertheless since the last inspection there have been a number of positive developments which provide a sound launch pad for the future. Significantly, the profile of the service is much more prominent both across the borough and in schools. At a strategic level, there have been effective inputs to the development of the authority's policy on social inclusion and useful links established with a number of cross-borough agencies for example those within Social Services. There is now a Traveller co-ordinator in every school and a start has been made on the development of curriculum support materials and resources in both primary and secondary schools. Support for individual pupils in primary schools is generally well received, though the staffing allocation is very modest.

71. There have been some useful contacts made with the co-ordinator for the London Traveller education consortium. As a result, a database is being established; the tracking of pupils' progress, achievement and attendance remains a major priority and is at early stages of being tackled. The social inclusion strategy sets out clear principles to underpin the work including access to education for young Travellers and children from transient families. These laudable principles challenge the current policy and practice on unauthorised encampments that deny access and entitlement to education for Traveller children on these sites.

## **Recommendation**

### **In order to ensure access to education for all Traveller children:**

- reconcile council policy on unauthorised encampments with the principles set out in the council's social inclusion strategy.

## **Support for gifted and talented pupils**

72. Overall progress in this area has been unsatisfactory, as the LEA was slow to initiate activity following the previous inspection. In the past few months, however, progress has accelerated. A thorough audit of needs has been carried out, some appropriate targets for future action have been set and a strategy has been drafted. Training and guidance for teachers and governors is published for the current term and summer school planning is underway. Schools have been invited to comment on the strategy and action plan.

73. The draft strategy is a balanced and useful statement. It clarifies the pupils being targeted, summarises background research and offers relevant guidance. The action plan gives appropriate details of the tasks to be undertaken and sets some challenging time-scales for delivery. Tasks are well referenced to the achievement of targets within the EDP. However, links with other providers such as higher education institutes are not explored sufficiently and there is no reference to building on the good practice of Excellence in Cities work in other areas of the country. The LEA's provision for pupils with particular talents in sports and arts is at an early stage of being included into the overall strategy.

74. LEA targets for higher level attainments have been set at all key stages and these are challenging yet realistic, given current performance across the borough. Although some schools are setting such targets, they are not consistently linking this process to a defined strategy for supporting gifted and talented pupils.

75. It is too early for impact to be measured, although some good examples can be cited. Numbers of schools with policies and registers of gifted and talented pupils are increasing, and more schools are appointing co-ordinators. Existing practice in music and drama, targeted at gifted and talented pupils, is being drawn into the strategic plan as is primary school master class teaching pilot in science and maths. However, schools do not yet perceive these services as integral elements of the LEA's gifted and talented strategy.

76. Given the accelerated rate of activity in recent months, the level of planning and the evident commitment of schools, the prognosis for improvement is good. As yet, practice has not caught up with intention. Nevertheless, priorities are now clear and staffing, structures and systems are in place to support the delivery of the plan.

## **Support for school management**

77. In the previous inspection this function was judged to be satisfactory overall. It remains so, with strengths outweighing remaining areas of weakness. The improving systems to monitor and challenge schools and a developing school self-evaluation process are beginning to enable advisers and other officers to focus management support to meet the specific needs of headteachers and other senior school managers.

78. The school self-evaluation scheme is detailed and comprehensive and the schools which have piloted it have found it helpful and easy to use. Good use is made of national programmes, such as the National Professional Qualification for Headteachers, to develop staff and strengthen the management capacity in schools. Advisers plan professional development courses and appropriate use is made of independent consultants to provide some of the tutoring. A sensible decision has been taken to review the training on offer, which is likely to reduce the amount provided but ensure that each course is of the highest quality. There are a number of areas that are under-developed in supporting school management, for example supporting school senior managers to become informed purchasers of services.

79. Good progress has been made in linking with national organisations to promote management and leadership training. The LEA has been successful in linking with the National College for School Leadership to develop a subject leaders' training course that is being led jointly by the LEA and one of the Beacon schools. This is an innovative development and likely to offer a relevant and very useful opportunity to middle managers in schools. The General Teaching Council is also funding the LEA to review its training strategy. This is aimed to ensure that the various LEA sections involved in training have a clear framework in which to work and that an overall coherent offer of training is made available to teachers and support staff. Increasingly advisers are following up staff in schools who have attended training to evaluate the impact it has had on teaching and learning; this is good practice.

## **Support to governors**

80. Support for school governors was judged as satisfactory in the previous inspection and remains so. Recommendations were that views of governors should be more systematically sought, that more effective feedback should be given on resolutions submitted to education committee and that advisory visit reports should be shared with governors. These issues have been largely addressed, but in some cases more remains to be done.

81. Communication systems have improved greatly. Meetings now take place each term between the director and chairs of governing bodies to discuss policy and strategy, such as the recent Education Development Plan proposals, and the place of governors on the school partnership has been strengthened. Appropriate procedures have been agreed to ensure feedback on resolutions from governing bodies. The information provided to governors about school performance remains too limited, although this is in the process of being addressed. Currently, advisers' visit notes are not copied automatically or consistently to chairs and communication

between link advisers and chairs is not part of a planned strategy. Consequently, the role of governors in securing school improvement and their responsibility for raising standards is not sufficiently embedded in practice. This has been recognised by the LEA and improvements are planned for the next academic year.

82. Governors of schools causing concern to the LEA are effectively supported. In these cases chairs receive copies of monitoring reports and are appropriately involved in discussion with LEA officers and advisers, often through membership of school support groups.

83. The central training programme is comprehensive and well focused on areas of national and local concern. The quality is monitored and feedback from participants is usually positive, although attendance is sometimes poor. Development activities for individual governing bodies are often judged to be more effective in targeting needs. National training materials are carefully incorporated into the induction programme provided for new governors.

84. Staffing levels in this service have remained low but an additional appointment has now been agreed. A comprehensive range of information and support materials, of consistently acceptable quality and presentation, is provided for governing bodies. Briefings for specific agenda items are particularly helpful. Clerks, no longer part of a central service, are well advised through briefing meetings and guidance materials. Governor vacancies have been reduced and now stand at 12 per cent, in line with the national average.

### **Early Years, Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1**

85. Early years work was judged as an area of strength in the previous inspection. Activities pursued by the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP) and the LEA's advisory service continue to be well targeted and are resulting in an improving service which continues to demonstrate key strengths.

86. Seventy three per cent of three year-olds in the borough receive nursery education: the target of universal provision by the end of 2002 is likely to be met. There are sufficient places for all four year-olds although places offering extended childcare are not always available in areas of greatest need. Appropriate arrangements are underway to amend admission arrangements from September 2002, currently based on catchment areas, to ensure a match of need with availability.

87. There are some good examples of successful intervention and support for settings and nurseries where weaknesses are identified. Strategies for identification of settings needing support are not as comprehensive as they could be but some increase in staffing is planned for September 2002 to enable even more effective support.

88. Baseline assessments are used across the authority and are collated and analysed. Staff in some settings are unclear about arrangements for these assessments in the next academic year. This is in part due to delayed national guidance. Individual tracking of pupils is also being developed to enable value-

added data to be accessed over time. Since the last inspection there has been deterioration in average baseline scores with lowest scores in language and literacy. Literacy based training and development activities have been implemented in line with the National Literacy Strategy and this work is fully detailed in the current EDP.

89. Key Stage 1 standards, overall, remain in line with national averages and statistical neighbours' performance, but the Education Development Plan audit highlights the fact that the rate of improvement has faltered and has been lower than the national trend for the past 6 years. An analysis of school inspections indicates weaknesses in science and assessment. Key Stage 1 attendance is also falling. These deficiencies are rightly of concern to the LEA. Improvement targets and some appropriate action features in the EDP. One of the four local targets for education in the council's Public Service Agreement also relates to Key Stage 1 attendance. Joint action, by the early years team and the advisory service, to develop pedagogy across the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 is currently lacking. The professional interface between practitioners in these two key stages is not one of consistent mutual trust and understanding. Continuity and progression between the Foundation and Key Stage 1 is not yet secure.

### **Recommendations**

**In order to improve standards at Key Stage 1 the LEA and EYDCP should:**

- develop activities that focus on continuity and progression between the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 so that pedagogical skills are enhanced and professional trust improves; and
- work with schools and families of children from 3 years of age to improve attendance by securing a commitment to regular and consistent education as children move into Key Stage 1 and beyond.

### **Best Value review of the early years service**

90. A Best Value review of the early years service was undertaken in summer 2000. The review alone did not drive forward improvement since the service was already competent and had appropriate priorities for improvement. Three of the five recommendations were task-oriented and likely to have been taken forward anyway. The other two were of a structural and strategic nature and are impacting on the wider departmental and corporate agenda. The Best Value review was fundamentally weak; no external challenge was sought from the private, voluntary or independent sectors. Consultation was satisfactory and sensibly rationalised. Comparative analysis was weak and competitive options were not pursued although the possibility of establishing a separate early years unit was recognised.

### **Post-16 developments**

91. At the time of the previous report A Level results were below average, funding for students aged 16 and above was high relative to other key stages and it was judged that insufficient attention was given to this area in the EDP. The recommendation was that the LEA should seek to explore the reasons for low results

and consider the appropriateness of current pattern of course provision. The position now remains much the same although the average total point scores for A levels and GNVQ have improved, three schools with sixth forms have had positive inspection reports and eight schools have increased GNVQ provision. Crucially, planning by the LEA in partnership with schools and other agencies has been greatly improved.

92. Progress from Key Stage 4 to Key Stage 5 remains disappointing and many high attaining pupils underachieve at post-16. Redbridge has the highest staying on rate in the country, yet relatively little vocational or non-school based activity compared with similar authorities. Education Development Plan action is rightly targeted at extending the range of vocational pathways for 14-19 year-olds and increasing the range of learning settings to include more college- and work-based opportunities. Funding remains high. There is a degree of concern about the impact of imminent changes in funding streams but the LEA and the Learning and Skills Council are working well with schools to model different patterns.

93. The leadership and vision of the director have been critical factors in establishing post-16 partnership working. High level LEA commitment to the Connexions board, the London Development Agency Skills Commission and the Learning and Skills Council has enabled dialogue and trust to be established. Partnership activity with these and other relevant agencies is moving forward very well. Relationships are purposeful, and there has been open and honest debate about issues. All partners, including schools, are now keen to make the new arrangements work and to develop post-16 provision within the continuum of 14-19 curriculum developments.

94. Overall, schools have been slow to move to vocational activity and in the past the LEA has not actively challenged curriculum provision. However, there is now strong commitment from all partners to engage in pilot activities and extend provision and an understanding that this work forms a key element of the Education Development Plan and of the council's social inclusion strategy. Some good progress has already been made and a post-16 implementation group has been established to monitor progress. The next steps are key if change is to be embedded. Networking, sharing good practice and changing perceptions of vocational education are recognised as vital elements to be addressed. There is appropriate confidence in the LEA's ability to co-ordinate activity effectively.

### **The effectiveness of services to support school management**

95. The effectiveness of services to support school management was judged in the last inspection report to be satisfactory overall. This is still the case. Services are provided, for the most part, by staff located in service areas outside education. Although service level agreements have been developed and an in-house trade fair held, there is currently insufficient support and guidance for schools to make an informed choice of provider. Schools are also insufficiently involved in the identification of quality standards and monitoring of service level agreements. There is, however, a Best Value review of brokerage planned for education and the council is investigating the option of a council-run brokerage to assist schools with the procurement of management services.



96. The **provision of financial services** by the corporate finance team is overall highly satisfactory. Schools are satisfied with the quality of services received across the area, including those from payroll and internal audit, which provides useful and effective reports. All but three schools buy back a traded finance package.

97. Schools are issued with a comprehensive finance guide and budget planning guidance. However, neither includes advice on linking resource management to educational outcomes. Workshops have been available for heads on such issues as the impact of the Learning and Skills Council on sixth form funding. While no financial benchmarking is provided for schools, support for the use of the Audit Commission financial benchmarking website is planned for later in the year. Although schools have access to on-line information exchange, the quality of service is currently poor and not used but there are plans to rectify this after the introduction of broadband by the middle of 2002.

98. Since the last inspection improved consultation and the provision of indicative budgets have assisted in alleviating uncertainty about funding. However, the LEA has yet to challenge high levels of surplus balances with sufficient rigour and since the last inspection the proportion of primary schools with balances in excess of five per cent has increased from half to over three quarters. Half of all secondary schools are also in this position.

99. The **provision of personnel support** was judged satisfactory in the last inspection. No detailed fieldwork was undertaken in this area. However, school survey views and the LEA's view indicates that provision is still satisfactory. School focus groups identified the speed with which contracts are issued and staff changes as areas of concern.

100. In the last inspection, the **provision of property services** was judged as broadly satisfactory. This is still the case, with strengths outweighing weaknesses. Schools have access to satisfactory technical support from the corporate engineering and building services. Advice is linked to the LEA's asset management planning process and schools are supported, where appropriate, in bidding for additional sources of funding.

101. Capital projects are generally managed effectively and a process for identifying schools' satisfaction with projects is in place. Although this function was graded below satisfactory in the school survey, secondary headteachers interviewed during the inspection indicated that individual projects were satisfactorily managed. Traded services are provided by the schools' maintenance and development service. A useful handbook is provided to schools outlining the services available. Although virtually all primary schools buy into this service, almost a quarter of secondary schools do not. There are satisfactory arrangements for monitoring capital and major maintenance activity through officer meetings that ensure strategic and operational priorities are shared between LEA and corporate officers. Schools' satisfaction with maintenance issues is less than that for capital projects.

102. In the last inspection, ICT helpdesk support and training were judged satisfactory. However, major weaknesses included lack of investment and strategic

direction. In this inspection, the services for **ICT in school administration** are judged as satisfactory overall. The major weaknesses identified last time have been addressed and the strengths of services outweigh remaining weaknesses.

103. The LEA has developed an integrated ICT curriculum, administration and pupil performance data strategy which includes standards in the curriculum, e-learning, infrastructure and information management and administration as its priorities. The council committed the necessary resources to fund this strategy in October 2001.

104. The current system of electronic communication, identified as unreliable at the last inspection, is still poor. Plans are, however, well underway for fulfilling the council's 'implementing e-government statement' of July 2001, which includes a commitment to common links between the council and schools. The LEA is also on target to provide broadband to all schools by July 2002.

105. All schools, except one, purchase a generally satisfactory traded service that includes training, support for hardware and software (in partnership with the private sector), comparative data and support for government initiatives. Links between the services that support ICT in the curriculum and administration and data support to schools are underdeveloped. The Redbridge schools website is an avenue for supporting curriculum ICT rather than administration. It is not used to give schools access to LEA policies or consultation documents.

106. No judgement was made on **cleaning and caretaking, grounds maintenance or catering** in the last inspection and no significant fieldwork in these areas has been undertaken in this inspection. The LEA's view of the services is that they are all satisfactory. Schools' views in the school survey were all, however, below satisfactory. Apart from grounds maintenance, take-up is low.

### **The LEA's work in assuring the supply and quality of teachers**

107. This area was not inspected previously but the recruitment service for newly qualified teachers was judged as very effective. This service has been strengthened and significant recruitment activity has taken place since the last inspection. The LEA has had continued success in securing the supply and quality of teachers and overall delivery of this function is satisfactory with few areas of weakness.

108. Redbridge has a higher than average percentage of newly qualified teachers in post. Vacancies are increasing at foundation stage and in special schools. The number of teachers leaving Redbridge during 2001 was higher than average but reasons for this are unknown since the LEA does not routinely carry out exit questionnaires or polls.

109. Ongoing and detailed analysis of need has led to purposeful recruitment drives and overall recruitment targets have been met. A wide range of programmes has been established, in partnership with higher education institutions and neighbouring LEAs for new and existing teachers as well as those adults wishing to gain qualified teacher status. However, the work of the recruitment strategy manager and the early years' consultant on improving the recruitment of foundation

stage teachers is poorly co-ordinated. Good housing and accommodation packages are available and teacher development opportunities are marketed as a strategy for retention.

### **Recommendation**

#### **In order to fill the increasing number of vacancies in the foundation stage:**

- co-ordinate the recruitment activity of the recruitment strategy manager and the early years' consultant.

110. Good advice and support are provided for schools and newly qualified teachers in their first year. Recruitment support is also provided for governors when appointing new headteachers and deputies. The headteachers' induction programme provides a useful introduction to the borough as well as appropriate support for those new to the role. Specific and appropriate recruitment support is given to schools causing concern to the LEA.

111. An appropriate in-service training programme is provided, and opportunities for accreditation have increased. Good recent links have been made with other national bodies, for example with the National College for School Leadership and the General Teaching Council, to help drive forward improvements and schools are positive about their potential impact. Although in-service training take up overall is average the number of cancellations is high. The LEA is in the early stages of development of a coherent overarching strategy for continuous professional learning and development within which the in-service training programme could sit. This would provide a formalised tool for retention that systematically supports teachers and other staff in their career planning.

### **The effectiveness of services to support school improvement**

112. The LEA's effectiveness to support this function is satisfactory, as it was in the last inspection. A clear rationale and strategy for school improvement have been outlined which are the basis for the Education Development Plan activities. The outline plans for monitoring the progress made towards achieving targets have been further developed and this work is useful in giving detail of how it will happen and who will be involved. The work of the newly formed advisory team is focused on school improvement, and they are working to clear guidelines, procedures and strategies. Other services within the LEA are less developed in this way of working and therefore are not always supporting schools in the most consistent and appropriate way. Although several services are well regarded by schools, not all officers yet see how their work links to raising the quality of teaching, learning and the standards achieved by pupils.

113. The Education Development Plan has set out how a range of LEA services will be contributing to the school improvement programme, with the main focus on the advisory team. The systems that have been established in this team are enabling clear direction to be given to the work of individuals, which helps to ensure that activity is targeted on the most important school issues. Team members have relevant experience to be effective in their areas of responsibility and, together, provide a range of expertise that ensures that the needs of schools will be well met

in key areas, such as teaching and learning and leadership and management. Advisers continue to develop their expertise by keeping up-to-date, through practice, with national requirements in inspection, performance management and as accredited trainers.

114. The increased capacity that should come from the development of the team and additional appointments means that the prospects of further improvements in the LEA's support for school improvement are good. The detailed work plan and developing performance management arrangements are likely to ensure that individuals' workloads are carefully monitored. The LEA recognises that advisers should not become over-burdened, so enabling them to devote adequate time and remain focused on key areas of school improvement development.

## SECTION 3: SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

### Strategy

115. The previous inspection found that the strategy for special educational needs (SEN) was poor. The inspection recommendation addressed the need for the LEA to develop an explicit strategy that was based on a recent audit of needs and included a comprehensive and resourced policy for inclusion. Although the pace for change and development in this area was initially too slow considerable progress has been made more recently to address the criticisms in the last report. The strengths of the LEA's strategy outweigh its weaknesses.

116. The recent rapid progress is partly due to the appointment of additional staff at senior strategic and operational levels and the growing awareness within the services of the need to question and challenge previous ways of working. It is also the result of a wide-ranging and open consultation on future policy for SEN and inclusion. The consultation, which has been instrumental in shaping thinking, has included discussions with a variety of staff in schools, parents and governors as well as with service providers within and outside of the LEA and voluntary agencies. The result is a clear agenda reflected in a number of documents including the draft SEN policy, the SEN and inclusion programme for action, the revised Behaviour Support Plan and the EDP.

117. Cabinet has recently approved the draft SEN policy for final consultation. The policy and action programme provide a good base from which to move forward as they are informed by a recent audit of need, take account of other strategic plans including the corporate strategy for social inclusion and are comprehensive in scope. Clear targets have been set for action to support children and other key groups. The importance of cross agency working is recognised as is the need to integrate monitoring and evaluation into SEN work at a number of levels. While a clear commitment is made to the redistribution of resources to secure equity and effectiveness, the lack of financial analysis, projection and costings is the plan's main weakness. Not only does this mean that the LEA falls short of meeting part of one of the recommendations for action in the last report, more seriously, it is unable to demonstrate with confidence that it can afford to deliver SEN in line with its proposed strategy. This weakness is currently being addressed.

118. There is general recognition in the LEA that there is still some way to go to rebuild the confidence of schools and, in particular, parents and children in the LEA's SEN and inclusion strategy. It is too early to be able to see the impact of much of the work that has been underway. However, there is clear evidence that a more strategic approach to provision of support for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties is helping to reduce exclusions and keep more pupils in mainstream schools. There is cautious optimism within schools about the LEA's proposals.

### Recommendation

#### In order to improve strategic planning for SEN:

- cost the draft SEN policy in detail.

## **Statutory obligations**

119. In the previous report the LEA was judged as taking reasonable steps to meet its statutory obligations. While there has been progress in many aspects of its work relating to statutory responsibilities much of it is very recent and has had limited impact. Some parents feel disenfranchised from the LEA and too many schools experience unacceptable delays with assessments for the LEA's performance to be satisfactory.

120. After the previous inspection, the LEA's performance in completing statements within the required 18 weeks declined. Recent steps to increase staffing capacity and to tighten up administrative and professional processes are already improving the performance within education. However, overall performance has not recovered to previous levels. These delays are causing difficulties for schools as well as distress to parents and children, despite some interim support provided by the LEA during the assessment process. The main reason for delay has been continuing difficulties in obtaining information from other agencies. Some delays are also due to the failure of some schools to meet deadlines for requests for information. A good start has been made in working with key partners to help improve performance in meeting statementing deadlines but there is currently little evidence of impact.

121. Collaboration with the new health care services has led to a review of how speech and language therapy is managed and organised and the appointment of therapists. This is intended to improve response times and the continuity and consistency of provision. Headteachers are very positive about the involvement they have had in the review to date.

122. The LEA has improved the quality and quantity of information and support to parents, including the establishment of a SEN inclusion website and the recent appointment of a conciliation and mediation officer. Nevertheless some parents are very unhappy with SEN procedures and provision and appeals to the SEN tribunal are increasing. Open meetings held by the new head of service have only recently begun clarifying outstanding issues.

123. The SEN panel continues to meet regularly to ensure referrals are discussed quickly and is helpfully identifying trends and issues to inform the thinking and planning of the new SEN management group. The increasing involvement of the outreach service in annual reviews is leading to better monitoring and moderation of outcomes. The quality of statements written by the authority has continued to improve. However, little has been done to address the need to revise statements rather than continuously write amending notes or to make inroads into discontinuing statements, where this is appropriate. The LEA discontinues a smaller number of statements than other similar authorities or nationally.

## **Recommendations**

### **In order to improve the discharge of statutory responsibilities:**

- complete a clear and deliverable multi-agency action plan to meet the required deadline for writing draft statements; and
- set out criteria and procedures for the revision and discontinuation of statements in all appropriate cases.

## **School improvement**

124. In the previous inspection report there was recognition of good work in SEN particularly in terms of outreach. However, a number of staffing issues were identified as standing in the way of the service having the capacity to develop and improve. Recommendations identified the need for staffing to be reviewed: to improve the capacity for policy making; to provide more continuity in the educational psychology service; to meet the need for support for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties and to ensure consistent attendance of LEA personnel at annual and transition reviews. The LEA has made satisfactory, and in some areas, good progress, in meeting the requirements of these recommendations. Overall the LEA performance in this area remains satisfactory.

125. The identification of pupils with SEN is a collaborative process between the schools and the LEA and at an individual pupil level works effectively. There is praise for the information and training that is provided relating to the new SEN Code of Practice. Special education needs co-ordinators are confident in the range and quality of the support and training they and colleagues receive.

126. The LEA is now being more active in collecting information on the needs of specific groups of pupils, as well as on the quality of support that is provided, to inform practice as well as policy. A good audit of need and provision relating to pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties has informed the new Education Development Plan; and the revised behaviour support plan as well as the draft SEN and inclusion policy. In addition, specific groups of pupils are being targeted for improvement. For example, five schools have been involved in a project 'Learning to Learn' that focuses on the lowest performing 20 per cent of pupils.

127. There is commitment to increasing inclusive practice in mainstream schools and it is frequently built upon much of the good practice that is already in place. SEN support services, in collaboration with special schools are getting better at early identification and in providing support for more pupils within mainstream schools. For example the early years assessment service now provides support to pupils in their own school instead of bringing them out to a centre.

128. The LEA is working with schools to find ways of assessing the progress and attainment of pupils with special educational needs. A good example is the excellent collaborative project between all the special schools and the advisory team aimed at making effective use of P-scales in planning, assessing and in setting targets for those pupils not involved in National Curriculum key stage assessment.

## Value for money

129. When previously inspected, it was judged that the LEA gave satisfactory value for money and generally schools had sufficient funds to support pupils with SEN. However, there were some significant weaknesses. Recommendations focused on the need to improve monitoring: by placing more emphasis on cost effectiveness and feedback to schools on the analysis of school returns and by extending the existing process to include the adequacy and use of delegated funds relating to statements. There has been limited progress in implementing the recommendations and weaknesses now outweigh strengths in this area.

130. Budgetary control at LEA level continues to be tight. Despite a recent increase in the number of pupils with statements, the proportion is low within the total pupil population. In addition, savings resulting from the LEA's success in reducing the number of pupils with SEN educated out of the borough have offset the financial consequences of this increase. Involvement in benchmarking clubs has allowed some useful analysis of unit costs.

131. Past weaknesses in strategic planning in relation to SEN have meant that there is a lack of a strategic overview of the complex pattern of funding. This weakness considerably impairs the capacity of the LEA to assess the cost effectiveness of the current pattern of provision or to analyse the financial implications of its proposed SEN strategy. This is currently being addressed. A series of pertinent Best Value reviews of SEN functions are underway, and a seconded headteacher has started to analyse the SEN funding provided within school budgets, from LEA services and through special school outreach provision.

132. The LEA's systems for monitoring schools' expenditure on SEN and the progress of pupils are insufficiently consistent or regular. Notwithstanding the recent examples of good practice given in the previous section, the monitoring of the cost and impact of support for pupils with SEN in schools remains limited and there is no feedback given to schools

### **Recommendation**

#### **In order to improve the monitoring of the quality and impact of support for pupils with SEN:**

- in consultation with schools establish an effective system for evaluating the impact of SEN resources controlled by schools



## **SECTION 4: PROMOTING SOCIAL INCLUSION**

### **The strategy to promote social inclusion**

133. Overall the LEA satisfactorily promotes social inclusion in all aspects of its work and there are few areas of weaknesses. A corporate strategy was introduced in 2000. The chief executive and the elected members are committed to the promotion of social inclusion and this strategy is an attempt to draw together service activity in this area. Key aims for each service area are included with defined measurable targets; education targets are those included in the EDP. However, the strategy is insufficiently explicit about how joint objectives will benefit vulnerable groups and enhance social inclusion.

134. The management board has a strong commitment to joint working and social inclusion connections are gradually being established at a strategic level. The head of service for access, inclusion and pupil support attends the children's strategy board. A children's and young person's focus group is being planned and discussions are underway with social services about drawing on a current user group for this purpose. Sure Start funding enables targeted work with vulnerable families and is a key part of the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership plan. Cross agency funding is being accessed to secure a co-ordinated approach to services. An example is the setting up of collaborative training teams involving education, social services and the police to deliver child protection training in schools.

135. Action within the Education Development Plan targeted at vulnerable groups provides the LEA with a good framework for some multi-agency and inter-service work. For example a project, in partnership with the Local Government Association, to increase leisure opportunities for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties and those with mental health difficulties. Purposeful links between education and social services are evident in the local authority support provided for children in public care. Provision for unaccompanied asylum seekers and refugee minors is being piloted in one secondary school. Youth and community services are also making a good contribution to post-16 inclusion through a wide range of activities such as summer schools, work with disabled young people and residential events

136. The LEA has an effective and committed key consultation group for access and inclusion that is used as a sounding board for strategic decisions. The group has wide headteacher representation and meets regularly to look at practical and operational issues. Schools are positive about the LEA's commitment to social inclusion. Initiatives such as the inclusion conference and targeted Education Development Plan activity are supported.

137. Alongside these positive aspects a few weaknesses remain. At a strategic level joint activity is insufficiently embedded in planning processes. Operationally, high quality provision for young people is not always guaranteed. For example, the monitoring of young people placed in schools outside the LEA is not as systematic as it needs to be. This has been recognised and is being addressed. The amount of

education provision for all those pupils educated out of school is inadequate and too few pupils are reintegrated into mainstream education.

### **The supply of school places**

138. The LEA's approach to the provision of school places was judged satisfactory in the last inspection. The provision continues to be satisfactory with few areas of major weakness.

139. Overall, the LEA manages a complicated set of circumstances well. Surplus places are below five per cent in both primary and secondary phases. The borough is under significant pressure, particularly from high mobility and applications from out-of-borough parents. Although a reduction in the demand for primary school places is projected over the next five years, a seven per cent increase in demand for secondary places has been identified together with a 20 per cent increase in post-16 numbers. Accuracy of forecasting is within Audit Commission guidelines.

140. The school organisation plan was implemented ahead of the DfES timetable and the school organisation committee functions well. It has agreed a number of reductions in standard numbers and admissions limits, particularly in reception, to reduce surplus primary places. The LEA has also successfully provided additional secondary places through its new Private Finance Initiative funded school, which opened on time in September 2001. A further form of entry has been agreed at one of the community high schools for September 2002. Appropriately, the LEA links its work on school places planning with developments in asset management planning and other specific reviews, for example, within the Best Value reviews of SEN functions.

141. The strengths of the LEA include its effective systems for liaising with other agencies and providers to identify requirements for places and available capacity. Good examples of this are links with the Learning and Skills Council, the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership and neighbouring LEAs. Weaknesses include: its failure to tackle pockets of over and under-subscription in a sufficiently rigorous manner, and its failure to reach agreement as yet with schools on how to accommodate the increase in Key Stage 2 places required over and above Key Stage 1.

### **Admissions**

142. At the time of the last inspection, the effectiveness of the LEA in relation to admissions to schools was judged to be satisfactory. The provision is now judged to be good.

143. The LEA deals with a highly complex situation in as effective a manner as is possible under the circumstances, despite some staffing difficulties. The admissions team handles admissions to primary schools, transfer to secondary schools and all in-year placements. Staff liaise well with a wide range of other admissions authorities in voluntary aided schools, independent schools and other LEAs as well as dealing efficiently with the inter-relationship between applications for Redbridge's own grammar schools and community high schools. All of this is achieved within a

context of high mobility and cross-border traffic, few surplus places and elements of overcrowding in some schools. All children are found a school place. An LEA review of admissions is scheduled to take place for implementation in 2004/05; its key focus will be the mobility issue.

144. While the admissions booklets are well presented, up to date and provide information in all of the main community languages, they do not include advice on how to choose a school. The admissions policy is detailed, with priority being given to catchment areas. The schools adjudicator has allowed the application of the policy variation in secondary school – that of placing children at the nearest least-oversubscribed school – to be extended into year 6.

145. At primary school, first choice preferences are well met but less so, perhaps not surprisingly, at secondary school. Admission is guaranteed, however, at the catchment school in year 7, if the transfer form is returned to the LEA within four weeks. The number of appeals is low in comparison to similar authorities. They are dealt with within the statutory timeframes and in time for induction of pupils into their new school the term before admission. All recent cases taken to the schools adjudicator, Ombudsman or judicial review have been found in the authority's favour.

146. Two weaknesses exist. The LEA has only just started setting an up admissions forum, despite member approval being given in 1999, and its approach to the reintegration of excluded pupils is insufficiently consistent and transparent.

### **Asset management**

147. The effectiveness of the LEA in discharging asset management planning is satisfactory with few areas of major weakness.

148. The condition survey has been completed and assessed as satisfactory by the DfES. Suitability surveys have been completed by schools and are now being moderated by an external consultant. Work is currently being undertaken on sufficiency that includes consideration of a range of models for delivering a variety of curricula in different sized schools.

149. Consultation with schools has taken place through a number of avenues, including the budget and resources key consultation group that agreed criteria for allocation of condition funds. A weakness lies in the communication of the outcomes of these consultations; schools do not yet feel that the process is sufficiently well understood or transparent. Condition of school buildings is generally good, however, partly due to the necessity of investing in the provision of additional school places, the LEA has inadequate funds to address all required improvements.

150. The LEA's rightly intends to provide all schools with individual asset management plans which identify both LEA and school responsibilities in priority order for future investment. A very successful pilot involving five schools has been undertaken; the process will be rolled out to all schools by May 2004.

## **Provision of education for pupils who have no school place**

151. Provision for pupils who have no school place was judged to be satisfactory in terms of practice in the last inspection report. Identification, monitoring and suitable tuition were in place as well as follow up support, as appropriate, to ensure reintegration into school. The lack of comprehensive documentation relating to the monitoring of pupils being educated at home was noted as being addressed through the Education Development Plan.

152. However, while the LEA continues to offer appropriate and high quality provision for many pupils being educated out of school there are a number of weaknesses that make this area unsatisfactory overall.

153. At a strategic level, the authority has not kept up to date with national expectations and there is a lack of coherence and consistency in its approach to providing suitable education for the different groups of pupils who, for a range of reasons, are out of school. The LEA's current education otherwise than at school policy concentrates primarily on those who have been permanently excluded and there is too little attention given to the needs of each of the other groups of pupils including, for example, young mothers and those being educated at home. The LEA has recently recognised the weaknesses across this area of provision and is actively seeking to address these, for example through a Best Value review.

### **Recommendation**

#### **In order to improve provision for pupils with no school place:**

- revise the education otherwise than at school policy to ensure that all groups are identified, fairly represented and supported appropriately.

154. While satisfactory systems for identifying pupils out of school and for monitoring the quality of provision are in place, more pupils remain out of mainstream education, and for a longer period of time, than the national average. In addition the amount of education the LEA provides for each pupil out of school has not been appropriately addressed. Satisfactory arrangements, including the opening of a new Key Stage 3 pupil referral unit, have been made to meet the requirement for all permanently excluded pupils to have at least 25 hours education provision by September 2002. However, at the time of the inspection there was a significant number of pupils, including eight permanently excluded, who were receiving less than ten hours education provision. For the majority of pupils out of school, this is not acceptable and should be tackled as a matter of urgency. The tuition service provides education for pupils at a number of bases that have not been registered with the DfES and, therefore, fall outside the statutory inspection and regulation arrangements that apply to all schools.

## **Recommendations**

### **In order to improve provision for pupils with no school place:**

- increase the amount of time provided for pupils with no school places in order to meet statutory requirements for permanently excluded pupils and to meet better the needs of other groups of pupils;
- develop a coherent cross-service strategy to increase the number and rate of reintegration back into mainstream schools; and
- ensure all education provision is registered appropriately.

155. The LEA has demonstrated in its Education Development Plan that it recognises that absence from school, for whatever reason, impacts on achievement. Particularly vulnerable groups of pupils, such as pupils most likely to be excluded, are being specifically targeted to ensure that high expectations of achievement are being set. The importance of coherent and co-ordinated multi-agency support and good links with parents is evident in recent planning, for example, in the revised behaviour support plan. The quality of provision, particularly for pupils who have been permanently excluded at Key Stage 4, is good. The pupil referral unit has a justifiably high reputation with students. The unit has recently achieved an award for its careers education and a higher percentage of students achieve one or more GCSE examination passes than students receiving similar tuition nationally. There is appropriate documentation now available to support advisers and consultants in the monitoring pupils being educated at home. Appropriate arrangements for hospital tuition are made by the tuition service.

## **Attendance**

156. Improvement in the rate of attendance over a three-year period in both primary and secondary schools was noted in the last inspection report and the support provided by the education welfare service was praised. The LEA's support for improving pupil attendance is currently satisfactory with few weaknesses.

157. However, while progress in support for attendance is satisfactory overall, in primary schools this trend of improvement has not continued, particularly in Key Stage 1. In 2001 attendance rates in primary schools decreased and the number of unauthorised absences increased. The LEA has identified quickly that there is a need to prioritise primary attendance for improvement and highlighted it for action in the new Education Development Plan. Clear and appropriate targets for attendance over the next three years have been set both for the authority and for individual schools. While LEA monitoring indicates that attendance in primary schools is now rising, the issue remains a high priority for the service.

158. Secondary school attendance has continued to improve and is well above the national average. The authority is now the third highest in the country for secondary attendance and has no intention of resting on its laurels. A number of effective projects are underway, for example, the work being undertaken by one school aimed at encouraging mothers of pupils from Asian families to meet with the education

welfare officer in the school in relaxed surroundings. Through the use of interpreters and translators, parents have been able to discuss pupil attendance and the impact it is having on attainment. The project has been successful both in the numbers of parents attending and in exceeding schools' attendance targets last year.

159. The education welfare service is currently involved in a Best Value review as part of the wider review of some of the services that directly impact on social inclusion. In the interim there has been a restructuring of the service to facilitate the setting up of a dedicated primary and secondary team and to deploy staff more effectively to need. Schools continue to value Education Welfare Service work. The service has recognised that they have insufficiently detailed information on which to make clear judgements about the impact that different kinds of non-attendance (for example, extended holidays and mobility) have on attainment. This is being addressed.

### **Behaviour support**

160. Policy work within the LEA, such as the behaviour support plan, was judged to be satisfactory in the last inspection, with practice judged as good. However, schools saw overall support from the LEA for behaviour as inadequate, a key criticism being their lack of involvement in policy formulation. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory overall, and in some areas good. Overall, the LEA's support in this area is highly satisfactory.

161. At an operational level, the LEA and schools have focused their energies successfully on reducing the number of fixed and permanent exclusions and providing the training and outreach support necessary to help staff in mainstream schools work confidently with pupils with behaviour difficulties. Permanent exclusions in both primary and secondary schools have reduced and remain below the national rate. The LEA targets set for permanent exclusions for the last two years have been exceeded and are on track for a further reduction in exclusions this year.

162. While headteachers and school staff generally praise the quality of provision they still consider that there is a lack of clarity about what support is available, from where and who is paying for it. Consistency and coherence of message is also an issue because of the range of services and organisations contributing to training and guidance on behaviour issues. These concerns have partly been resolved through the bringing together of a number of the services under the umbrella of New Rush Hall School and through the development of multi-agency planning such as that undertaken by the children and families and education liaison meetings. It is recognised that further work needs to be done.

163. Progress on meeting the requirement for a revised behaviour support plan in April 2001 has been slow. However, the plan has now been completed, agreed and published. The revision, which was drawn up by a steering group with headteacher and multi-agency representation, took account of the results of an audit of need, the progress made on the previous behaviour support plan and the views expressed by a wide range of stakeholders. The plan is comprehensive in its scope, sets clear and challenging targets for attendance and exclusions, clarifies the respective roles

of the LEA and schools, maps the range of support that is available and, importantly, identifies a mechanism for monitoring and evaluating progress. Appropriate links have been made to other corporate and education plans including, for example, the Education Development Plan and Quality Protects management action plan. What is still missing is a comprehensive analysis of the funding currently available for behaviour support and a detailed costing of how this relates to the plan. The work currently underway to provide a financial underpinning for the SEN strategy is intended to address this deficiency.

### **Health, safety, welfare and child protection**

164. The LEA's role in health, safety, welfare and child protection was judged to be satisfactory in the last inspection with one exception, which was promptly resolved. It is now judged to be good.

165. The LEA is making good progress in these service areas. There is evidence to demonstrate that a thorough process of audit, training and guidance is in place. The LEA continues to meet its statutory obligations in respect of child protection and is working hard to secure continuous improvement in the support it provides to schools. There is an annual monitoring of schools to ensure that policies and designated staff are in place and a comprehensive training programme is available to a wide range of staff including drivers and escorts. The training programme includes guidance to staff on positive handling which schools report have had a good impact on how they manage difficult, and potentially physically aggressive, pupils in schools.

166. While schools indicate that procedures in place for child protection are good there are concerns at an operational level, particularly in primary and special schools, about the poor level of communication with social services and the health authority. At a strategic level there is evidence to show that relationships across the agencies are good and that attention is being given to improvements in the services being provided. There are some excellent initiatives underway including the development of training for school staff on site from a cross agency team and the re-designing of incident report forms to facilitate better LEA analysis of the nature and handling of incidents at each stage.

### **Children in public care**

167. This area of activity was judged to be satisfactory with few areas of major weakness in the previous report. Although it was not subject to the full inspection process, sufficient evidence was available through documentation and interviews to enable a judgement that progress has been made in this area and the provision is now good.

168. A LEA co-ordinator is now in post and is working closely and successfully with other agencies, particularly social services. Service plans reflect a coherent strategy, with commitment by all partners. All schools have co-ordinators for children in public care and comprehensive, high quality guidance has been published to support them. Training has recently been provided for designated teachers and for

social services staff. Further training is underway for foster parents and school governors.

169. Published guidance provides a clear foundation for joint LEA and social services working. It includes unequivocal principles, and defines roles, responsibilities and procedures for information sharing. The council takes its corporate parenting role seriously and its responsibilities are clearly defined. A corporate parenting group is accountable for the delivery of the strategy with a members' sub-group overseeing developments and monitoring standards.

170. The percentage of children in public care gaining GCSE grades is above the national and statistical neighbour percentage for five or more A\*-C grades but below for one or more A-G. However, numbers are very small and reliable trends cannot therefore be identified. The Education Development Plan identifies challenging targets for the achievement of children in public care and proposes clear action to ensure targets are met. The schools where these pupils are educated are known and education welfare officers, two of whom specialise in working with children in public care, monitor attendance. A few children in public care are educated outside the borough and attainment data on the majority of these pupils are now available.

### **Measures to combat racism**

171. The LEA was considered in the last inspection to have made a good response to the report of the inquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence. The support currently provided by the LEA in this area is satisfactory with few weaknesses.

172. Satisfactory, and in some aspects, good progress has been maintained at both a corporate and education department level within the council to continue to recognise and meet its responsibilities in combating racism in schools. During interviews and within documentation, officers demonstrated that there is a clear understanding of the impact racism can have on the attainment of individual pupils. Similarly the importance of ensuring that the LEA and individual schools having secure systems in place to track the progress of minority ethnic pupils across the key stages was also widely recognised.

173. Good links have been made between the borough's social inclusion strategy and the Education Development Plan, including activities aimed at maximising the progress of key groups of pupils who are potential victims of racism. A number of specific targets that recognise the increasingly diverse nature of the community have been set for schools. These include, for example, increasing the number of employees from different ethnic backgrounds employed in schools.

174. Appropriate action is underway to support schools with the implementation of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and to monitor the requirement that each school has a race relations policy in place by the end of May. Training is well planned and valued and is rightly available to a wide range of groups including, for example, governors and learning support assistants. The LEA's support for schools to implement the Commission for Racial Equality standards is well planned and this development will enable it to better evaluate the impact of its work in combating racism. Rightly, relevant LEA staff see their work as supporting schools in these



processes rather than taking the lead, which is in line with the LEA's overall aim of developing self-managing schools.

175. Eight of the criteria on the checklist drawn up following Report of the inquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence are currently being met and work is in hand to address the others. Inspection evidence supports the LEA's concern that, although there are clear guidelines and procedures for reporting incidents to the LEA and the number of reports of racial incidents in school has gradually increased over the last three years, not all incidents are reported to the LEA. A successful, collaborative conference last year raised awareness on the importance of reporting and recording incidents but a more proactive process of LEA monitoring and follow up still needs to be secured.

## **SECTION 5: CORPORATE ISSUES**

### **Corporate planning**

176. In the last report the clarity, consistency, coherence and feasibility of corporate plans were judged to be satisfactory. Since the inspection, corporate planning processes have been strengthened and they are satisfactory with few major weaknesses. The corporate vision, priorities and values are sharper and clearly linked to service areas and outcomes; there is a much greater awareness of their importance within services and schools. The roles and responsibilities of members of the management board and of senior officers for aspects of corporate planning have been clarified. In particular each board member has responsibility for a key cross cutting theme. The development of the management board and cabinet workplans has provided an effective means for organising and overseeing corporate planning activity. There is much greater involvement of the senior education officers in corporate planning.

177. Nevertheless, a few weaknesses remain. A community strategy has yet to be drafted. Current planning processes are insufficiently informed by the rigorous evaluation of the outcomes of existing plans. While there is greater commitment to joint working at strategic level, there is too little evidence of the interrelation of actions in relevant corporate plans. Senior managers and members are aware of these deficiencies and they are being addressed.

178. Previously the council's procedures for implementing and evaluating corporate plans were judged to be unsatisfactory overall. The council's performance management structure was weak and there was an inadequate relationship between team and individual targets and corporate priorities and service objectives. Over the past two years there has been significant improvement in this area and it is now satisfactory overall, with strengths outweighing weaknesses.

179. A strategic framework for education, produced jointly by LEA officers and members and school representatives within the school partnership, efficiently sets out the links between the council's vision and values and education statutory and service plans and provides a clear articulation of the educational dimension of corporate plans. The new Education Development Plan provides a well-structured school improvement strategy and its implementation is already improving monitoring and evaluation processes in this area. These developments fit well into the established planning processes at corporate and directorate level. However, despite recent improvements, weaknesses remain in performance management arrangements, the quality of planning at section and team level and in the linkages between financial and service planning.

#### **Recommendation**

##### **In order to improve the implementation of corporate plans:**

- establish standards for the content and quality of team and section planning.

## **The speed, transparency and effectiveness of decision-making**

180. In the last inspection, the speed, transparency and effectiveness of financial decision-making were judged as very poor and failing to provide effective support to schools. Although consultation on additional delegation had improved, headteachers and governors had insufficient opportunities to influence priorities and no indicative budgets were given to schools. Recommendations were aimed at improving budget consultation, providing earlier indicative budgets and making financial decision-making speedier and more transparent.

181. Financial decision-making is now satisfactory, with strengths outweighing weaknesses. Through the vehicle of the schools partnership and other groups, there is much greater involvement of headteachers and school governors in financial decision making and they are working with key corporate officers to improve the transparency of corporate finance. Progress is being made on developing three-year budget planning and on improving the alignment of financial plans with corporate and service priorities. The budget setting process, which used to commence in autumn, now commences in April. Schools receive an indicative budget in January.

182. There remain some weaknesses. There is little evidence of evaluation of the impact of decision-making. Corporate recharges to education, and related trading agreements are insufficiently transparent and the current process does not enable judgements about value for money to be made.

### **Recommendation**

#### **In order to improve corporate decision making processes:**

- increase the transparency of corporate recharges to education and related trading agreements.

## **Leadership of elected members and senior officers**

183. The failure of both members and senior officers to provide effective leadership was the most serious judgement of the inspection team during the previous inspection. A poor relationship between headteachers, senior officers and elected members was compounded by the effective exclusion (until shortly before the inspection) of the director from corporate decision making processes. Inevitably members were unable to fulfil their proper strategic role in respect of education, understood schools poorly and made ill-informed decisions. Since then a fundamental change in culture at member and senior officer level has taken place. Senior officers are providing good leadership, an effective partnership has been established between the LEA and schools and the leadership of members is satisfactory overall.

184. Senior officers, headteachers, governors and elected members have worked diligently to implement the recommendations of the previous inspection to improve the LEA's partnership. Protocols and procedures relating to member processes have been improved and are now more consistent with the strategic role of

members. Difficult decisions made by members have reflected their commitment to supporting improvement in education. The newly established schools partnership has largely succeeded in establishing an effective relationship between schools and the LEA.

185. The quality of advice provided to members has improved considerably. Reports are relevant, suitably concise and accessible; however, they are sometimes too bland, and do not always include sufficient challenge to existing service or policy assumptions.

186. There are still some weaknesses. Members' understanding of schools autonomy is uneven. The extent of delegation to officers remains insufficient and is inconsistent with the proper strategic role of members. Consequently some headteachers are still unconvinced about the changes in the attitude of members to education and schools.

### **Recommendation**

#### **In order to improve corporate decision making processes:**

- increase the scope of delegation to the chief executive and the director of education and lifelong learning; and
- ensure advice to members includes, where relevant, more consistent challenge to existing service and policy assumptions.

187. While the senior management team in the directorate of education and lifelong learning is new, each officer has provided good leadership immediately from the time of arrival. The early priorities have, rightly, been to improve the strategy and support for school improvement. However, generally satisfactory progress is being made in other areas such as support for pupils with special educational needs and in services supporting social inclusion. Over the past two years, support from the chief executive and other members of the management board has been effective. In response to the school survey and during interviews, headteachers acknowledged the improvements made by the LEA and, in particular, the strong leadership of the director of education and lifelong learning and her management team.

### **Partnership**

188. At the time of the last inspection the LEA's work with other agencies was judged to be satisfactory. There has been improvement and overall the LEA's partnership activity is highly satisfactory. The strengths previously reported have been built upon and there is an increasing strategic focus to partnership activity, with clearer alignment between the council's educational and social inclusion priorities and partnership activity. This is particularly evident in the increasing range of joint working in relation to the 14 to 19 age group. The director is taking a leading role on the Connexions board and in the development of the London East Learning and Skills Council. There is a myriad of school and pupil focused joint working initiatives either involving or being led by staff within the youth and community service including work with health authorities on health related projects. The excellent and

constructive relationships with Anglican and Roman Catholic Diocesan boards and with representatives from the Jewish, Muslim and other faith communities have been maintained. The partnership work involving education services is generally well organised, monitored and evaluated.

189. However, there remain some weaknesses. Notwithstanding recent improvements, the LEA has made little progress in working with health services to reduce delays in the assessment of pupils for statements of SEN. The effectiveness of joint working between council departments is uneven and some headteachers are critical of liaison with social services. While the education officers and schools make useful contributions to the corporate partnership activity, the role of education officers and mainstream education in the Redbridge's local strategic partnership is currently underdeveloped.

## **APPENDIX 1: RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **SECTION 1: THE LEA STRATEGY FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT**

**In order to improve the council's approach to continuous improvement:**

- the performance management framework should be consistently and effectively implemented across all elements of the education service; and
- detailed guidance and support should be offered to school managers in implementing all aspects of Best Value principles.

### **SECTION 2: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT**

**In order to ensure access to education for all Traveller children:**

- reconcile council policy on unauthorised encampments with the principles set out in the council's social inclusion strategy

**In order to improve standards at Key Stage 1 the LEA and EYDCP should:**

- develop activities that focus on continuity and progression between the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 so that pedagogical skills are enhanced and professional trust improves; and
- work with schools and families of children from 3 years of age to improve attendance by securing a commitment to regular and consistent education as children move into Key Stage 1 and beyond.

**In order to fill the increasing number of vacancies in the foundation stage:**

- co-ordinate the recruitment activity of the recruitment strategy manager and the early years' consultant.

### **SECTION 3: SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS**

**In order to improve strategic planning for SEN:**

- cost the draft SEN policy in detail.

**In order to improve the discharge of statutory responsibilities:**

- complete a clear and deliverable multi-agency action plan to meet the required deadline for writing draft statements; and
- set out criteria and procedures for the revision and discontinuation of statements in all appropriate cases.

**In order to improve the monitoring of the quality and impact of support for pupils with SEN:**

- in consultation with schools establish an effective system for evaluating the impact of SEN resources controlled by schools

**SECTION 4: PROMOTING SOCIAL INCLUSION**

**In order to improve provision for pupils with no school places:**

- revise the education otherwise than at school policy to ensure that all groups are identified, fairly represented and supported appropriately;
- increase the amount of time provided for pupils with no school places in order to meet statutory requirements for permanently excluded pupils and to meet better the needs of other groups of pupils;
- develop a coherent cross-service strategy to increase the number and rate of reintegration back into mainstream schools; and
- ensure all education provision is registered appropriately.

**SECTION 5 CORPORATE ISSUES**

**In order to improve the implementation of corporate plans:**

- establish standards for the content and quality of team and section planning

**In order to improve corporate decision making processes:**

- increase the transparency of corporate recharges to education and related trading agreements;
- increase the scope of delegation to the chief executive and the director of education and lifelong learning; and
- ensure advice to members includes, where relevant, more consistent challenge to existing service and policy assumptions.

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