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IN EDUCATION**

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LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY**

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## INTRODUCTION

1. This inspection was carried out by OFSTED in conjunction with the Audit Commission under Section 38 of the Education Act 1997 and the Local Government Act 1999. The inspection used the *Framework for the Inspection of Local Education Authorities*, which focuses on the effectiveness of local education authority (LEA) work to support school improvement. The inspection also takes account of the Local Government Act 1999 insofar as it relates to the work undertaken by the LEA on Best Value.
2. The inspection was partly based on data, some of which was provided by the LEA, on school inspection information and audit reports, on documentation and discussions with LEA members, staff in the education department and in other Council departments and representatives of the LEA's partners. In addition, a questionnaire seeking views on aspects of the LEA's work was circulated to all schools. The response rate was 78 per cent.
3. The inspection also involved studies of the effectiveness of particular aspects of the LEA's work through visits to 12 primary schools, five secondaries and two special schools. The visits tested the views of governors, headteachers and other staff on the key aspects of the LEA's strategy. The visits also considered whether the support that is provided by the LEA contributes, where appropriate, to the discharge of the LEA's statutory duties, is effective in contributing to improvements in the school, and provides value for money. Further evidence was considered from the inspection of the implementation of the literacy and numeracy strategies in another seven primary schools.

## COMMENTARY

4. The London borough of Redbridge is a largely suburban area in north-east London. The borough is very diverse, but in socio-economic terms it is not far from the national average. Unemployment is above national average, but low for London. There are high levels of home ownership. The area is also ethnically diverse, with nearly half of the total population from minority ethnic communities. The wide range of ethnic, religious and cultural diversity is reflected in the school population. About a third of pupils in primary and secondary schools have English as an additional language.
5. The schools are doing well. Attainment at the end of the first three key stages is average, but improving in many respects at a faster rate than is the case nationally. It is at GCSE level where Redbridge schools have made most improvement. The performance of pupils has been above or well above the national and statistical neighbour averages in recent years; the authority had the fifth best results in the country in 1999. Results at A level, however, are below average. While the high staying-on rates may contribute to this, the contrast with GCSE needs further investigation and action to improve matters. Redbridge schools are popular, with an average of 11 per cent of pupils coming from outside the borough, and figures of over 25 per cent in five secondary schools.
6. Schools achieve these results despite problems in the management of both the corporate centre and the education service, which have reduced the effectiveness of the LEA's support. During recent years, there has been a severe deterioration in relationships between schools and the LEA. A number of factors have caused this, including a slowing down of decision making and a reduction in its openness. Although the lack of overall control on the Council has contributed to this, elected members have given poor leadership. They have not collaborated sufficiently with senior officers in education nor always taken account of educational, rather than financial, arguments when making strategic decisions.
7. Members approved a change to the structure of the Council's services, which made the Chief Education Officer (CEO), along with other heads of service, a third tier post. This, together with poor communications, meant that education expertise did not always inform important budgetary decisions. Headteachers rightly felt that this undermined the position of education within the Council. The attitudes of some members have worked against the development of a partnership with schools. Neither headteachers nor members of the education committee were involved in the unsuccessful appointment process for a new CEO last year.
8. These problems were further compounded by a pattern of spending below the Standard Spending Assessment (SSA), by budgetary processes that lacked transparency and by a sustained series of cuts in key personnel at the centre, made without sufficient regard to overall strategy.

9. All of this combined to lower the morale of headteachers, who were further distanced from the authority by the failure of senior officers to consult them adequately or to develop services in partnership with them. The poor nature of consultation is best illustrated in relation to the Educational Development Plan (EDP). As in all LEAs, consultation took place to a tight time scale, but the process in Redbridge left headteachers feeling they lacked any real say in how the authority determined its priorities. In consequence, headteachers and governors alike see little relevance in the EDP to their own schools. The leadership of the education service has not articulated and shared a sufficiently clear vision for education in the borough.
10. The LEA has thus moved from what was a position of some strength to one in which headteachers now feel at odds with the LEA. In the midst of all of this, many still value the support and guidance provided by individual officers and advisers, and the quality of services on the ground is mainly satisfactory. In addition, there are areas of particular strength:
- support for literacy;
  - support for early years education;
  - financial support;
  - the recruitment and induction of newly qualified teachers;
  - relationships with external partners;
  - provision for pupils who have been excluded from school;
  - support for school attendance;
  - support for health and safety, welfare and child protection;
  - measures to combat racism and social exclusion;
  - support for minority ethnic pupils.
11. The weaknesses, however, are fundamental, stemming mainly from the context in which education operates within the Council. The LEA's poor relationships with schools have the effect of devaluing much of what it has tried to do. The main weaknesses are:
- the quality of the EDP;
  - the targeting of resources to priorities;
  - the defining of the LEA's role in respect of monitoring, challenge, support and intervention, and the sharing of this with schools;
  - the strategic planning of services to support school improvement;
  - the performance management of these services;
  - support for Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the curriculum and in administration;
  - the speed, openness and effectiveness of decision making, especially financial;
  - the quality of leadership given by elected members;
  - the quality of leadership given by senior officers; and
  - the clarity of the LEA's strategy for special educational needs (SEN).
12. The LEA needs, above all, a sea change in attitude. Most of its services are

competent or better, but the whole is less than the sum of the parts because there is a recent legacy of mistrust, and no effective partnership between the LEA and its schools. The fundamental change required is in the approach adopted by elected members. There are already signs of that change occurring, but not, as yet, wholly convincing signs, and the LEA has much to do if it is to rebuild a partnership with schools based on trust. The LEA must be prepared for a return inspection within two years.

## SECTION 1: THE LEA STRATEGY FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

### Context

13. Redbridge is a predominantly suburban area of north-east London with a population of 235,000 and a school population of about 43,000. A low percentage of the working population have jobs in the borough, a majority commuting to east or central London. Socio-economically Redbridge is about average, though with some variation: a quarter of its wards are among the wealthiest in England while two have relatively high levels of deprivation. Since 1993, unemployment has decreased and remains below rates for East London and Greater London, but above the national average. There are high levels of home ownership.
14. Entitlement to free school meals is 17.2 per cent in primary schools, compared with 18.9 per cent nationally, and 17.7 per cent for secondary schools, compared with 16.9 per cent nationally. The proportions of pupils with statements of special educational need (SEN) are 1.5 per cent in primary schools and 2.3 per cent in secondary schools, well below the national figures of 2.6 and 3.0 per cent respectively.
15. Minority ethnic communities comprised 45.6 per cent of the total population in the 1991 census, compared to the national figure of 6.2 per cent. The school population has a wide range of ethnic, religious and cultural diversity. The proportion of children from ethnic minorities in schools is 53 per cent, with pupils of Indian heritage being the largest single group. Thirty nine per cent of pupils in primary schools and 42 per cent in secondary have English as an additional language (EAL). There is a very small proportion of Traveller children. There are currently over 1400 refugee pupils attending schools in the borough with over 50 different first languages.
16. The authority maintains 52 primary schools, of which nine are infant schools and eight junior schools. There are 16 secondary schools; two of these are grammar schools and two have specialist status. The authority also maintains five special schools and a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU). The percentage of under-fives on the roll of all primary schools is 60 per cent. All secondary schools have their own sixth form and the majority of Redbridge pupils stay on in their schools. Some choose to attend Redbridge College or other FE colleges. Redbridge schools are large, particularly in the primary sector where the average roll is 401. Only one school is smaller than the national average size for all primary schools. Sixth forms are also large. Occupancy rates are high, particularly in secondary schools, with an overall shortage of capacity in both phases.
17. Redbridge schools 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; for example 2,500 places and 500 nursery places have been added to existing primary schools since September 1993.



## Performance

18. The attainment of pupils on entry to full-time education is in line with the national average. Pupils' performance up to Key Stage 3 is mainly in line with or better than that of pupils nationally and in statistical neighbours. Redbridge schools improved their Key Stage 2 and 3 English and mathematics results, between 1995 and 1999, at a faster rate than schools nationally and those in statistical neighbours.
19. Results take a marked upturn at GCSE, with pupils performing above or well above the national and statistical neighbour averages for five A\*-C, five A\*-G and one A-G grades. The five A\*-C figure improved faster than the national average between 1997 and 1999 and was the fifth highest nationally in 1999.
20. Results compare less favourably at A Level. The results of pupils entered for two or more subjects are below national and statistical neighbour averages. The average points score per candidate improved more slowly than the national rate between 1996 and 1999. Advanced GNVQ results, however, were in line with national and statistical neighbour averages in 1999.
21. Inspection findings have broadly reflected this picture for attainment and quality of education in primary and secondary schools. More schools, both in the primary and secondary phases, were judged to be good or very good than in statistical neighbours or nationally. Only one school has been placed in special measures, coming out of this category after 18 months; no school has been judged to have serious weaknesses.
22. 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 somewhat higher than the national average in primary schools but lower in secondary schools. The rate of permanent exclusions has been lower than the national and statistical neighbour rates in recent years, both in primary and secondary schools.

## Funding

23. The Council has consistently spent less than its total Education Standard Spending Assessment (SSA) on education in recent years.

	1997/98	1998/99	1999/2000	2000/01
Budget (£000)	98,004	105,356	116,624	123,855
SSA (£000)	100,906	110,136	118,368	125,905
Budget at % of SSA	97.1	95.7	98.5	98.4

24. The level of funding is adequate to meet schools' basic needs. Overall spending on primary schools, however, is lower than the averages for Outer London and statistical neighbours. Spending on secondary schools is closer to the averages, but is still low considering the large number of post-16 students

in Redbridge schools.

		Local Schools Budget per pupil	
		Primary schools	Secondary schools
Redbridge		£2,167	£2,962
Outer London boroughs		£2,442	£3,138
Statistical neighbours		£2,304	£3,065
All LEAs in England		£2,293	£2,987

25. Spending on under fives is significantly above the SSA allocation, reflecting the Council's long-standing policy of having nursery classes in every primary school. Funding for 16+ students is high relative to other key stages. The overall balance of funding in favour of secondary schools is greater than in most LEAs and is a concern for many primary headteachers and governors.
26. The LEA has been active and successful in securing loan approvals and grants from a variety of sources for a sustained capital programme. Funding for a new secondary school will be provided through a Private Funding Initiative (PFI) scheme. Support is available but not well publicised for individual schools in bidding for grants from external providers.
27. Schools have secured more control over their spending as a result of Fair Funding. However, over 40 per cent of secondary schools responding to the school survey believed that the planned level of delegation from April 1999 was less than satisfactory. Delegation increased in 2000/01, but there is scope for a further increase and for a reduction in central budgets. In 2000/01 the LEA delegated 86 per cent of the schools' budget. Although higher than the averages for Outer London boroughs, statistical neighbours and all LEAs, the proportion appears more favourable because of the delegation of most of the support for pupils with SEN statements in mainstream schools, which many LEAs retain centrally.
28. The central budget for strategic management remains high, although the amount included for statutory and regulatory duties has been reduced in 2000/01 to below the Government's maximum target of £75 per pupil. Also, the LEA exceeded the Government's target of a six per cent increase in delegated funding per pupil (including Standards Fund) for 2000/01.
29. The funding formula itself is appropriately simple. However, most of the original rationale for the amounts allocated for each element has been lost in the time since local management was introduced. In the school survey, about 60% of primary schools felt that the clarity or fairness of the funding formula was less than satisfactory. However, written comments and school visits indicated that the concern was more to do with the balance of funding between the phases than with the formula itself.

## **Council structure**

30. The Council has 62 members. No party has overall control, with seats allocated as 29 Labour, 24 Conservative and nine Liberal Democrat. At present, a Labour member chairs the education committee, but this role has shifted between parties in recent years. Education is one of six committees; it has 19 elected and 8 co-opted members. It has one sub-committee and three panels.
31. A modernised local government structure was planned for introduction in September. A cabinet with a leader heads this, and there are seven area committees and three scrutiny committees. There is much still to do in determining the detail of this. In implementing the new structure, careful consideration is needed to ensure that education, as the largest spending service, is central to Council strategy making. Fundamental consideration is needed to address the poor relationships between members and schools, inadequate communications between members and senior officers, and the need for more transparent decision making.
32. A major re-organisation of the Council structure after the 1994 election saw three corporate directors working to the chief executive. The chief education Officer (CEO) was effectively part of a third tier, overseeing one of 27 services. Unlike some chief officers, the CEO did not report directly to the chief executive. This was an inappropriate structure for the highest spending service and it caused much concern amongst headteachers, who understandably perceived education to have been relegated within the authority. This single change, more than anything else, soured relationships between the authority and its headteachers.
33. This structure lasted until only recently. The selection process for a new CEO in July 1999 was marred by the decision on the part of the Council not to involve headteachers, despite their explicit and reasonable requests for such involvement. As a result of the failure to appoint and the case being made by schools and others, the post of CEO was effectively upgraded to report directly to the chief executive. The acting CEO now enjoys the enhanced features of the new post, including membership of the authority's management board. The leader of the Council at the time has since apologised for his part in the arrangements for appointing a CEO.
34. Members have belatedly recognised the problem of their relationship with headteachers, the poor sense of partnership that has existed and the need for a CEO who can provide visionary leadership at the most senior level. Only a major reappraisal of members' approach to partnership will offer any hope for the future of the LEA's relationship with its schools.

## **The Education Development Plan**

35. The Education Development Plan (EDP) was drawn up in consultation with headteachers, but the process was ineffective. Although timescales were

necessarily short, headteachers were not engaged in fully considering the priorities and feel they were simply presented with successive drafts for comment. Although they commented on these, the perception of many headteachers was that their views were not heard. The result of this is that few headteachers have any sense of this document being relevant to their school's developmental needs and priorities.

36. The priorities in the EDP are:

- Priority 1 Raising standards in literacy
- Priority 2 Raising standards in numeracy
- Priority 3 Raising standards in learning through ICT
- Priority 4 Ensuring achievement for all
- Priority 5 Raising standards across the primary curriculum
- Priority 6 Improving education for personal development, employability and citizenship
- Priority 7 Improving school leadership and management
- Priority 8 Improving continuity of learning for all

37. Strengths of the plan include an audit of need that reflected available data, including a helpful analysis of data on minority ethnic achievement and the outcomes of OFSTED inspections. Priorities match those identified nationally. LEA Key Stage 2 targets for 2002 present an appropriate level of challenge, whereas those for GCSE are insufficiently challenging. There is good attention to training for governors throughout the plan.

38. The plan includes some focus on the progress of the most able pupils although implementation is at an early stage. Several schools have appointed co-ordinators for gifted and talented pupils and the work of the LEA's drama and music centres plays a significant role in this respect. A more systematic approach to developing the support in schools for such pupils is now needed.

39. The major weakness of the plan is that it proposes too many activities and action points, which obscure priorities. As a result, it appears to be no more than a vehicle for work that was already planned or in place. It is not always clear what development is intended, and success criteria are often too vague or insufficiently linked to attainment. Except for the first three priorities, which relate to national programmes, activities and actions are insufficiently differentiated in their targeting; support for under-performing schools features as a single activity within Priority 7, rather than a theme enabling support to be targetted in inverse proportion to success. There is no local flavour to the plan, no feel for Redbridge, as opposed to national, priorities.

40. The plan pays insufficient attention to the need to improve attainment at A Level, which is below national average for pupils entered for two or more subjects. Comparative data shows that progress is insufficient for pupils with higher GCSE scores. There is a need for the LEA to explore the reasons for this with its schools and, in particular to consider whether the current pattern of course provision is appropriate for pupils of all abilities.

41. Monitoring of the plan is performed by a monitoring group, which includes headteachers, and by other groups for specific areas. Those advisers responsible for priorities meet termly to account for what has been achieved, although this information has not been relayed to schools. The education services management team evaluates, in broad terms, the EDP as a whole. Although pupil performances in literacy and numeracy are measured against school targets as part of the LEA's monitoring, and the LEA's performance tracked against statutory targets, there is, overall, too little emphasis on outcomes in considering the progress of implementation. An EDP focus group of headteachers has rightly identified the need for a clearer rationale for the plan, a stronger articulation of where the LEA is going and a need to communicate EDP activities and their impact to schools.

### **The allocation of resources to priorities**

42. The allocation of resources to priorities is poor, mainly because the budget planning does not facilitate a clear and rational approach to this and because overarching priorities are not clearly articulated. Reactive financial decisions have made it very difficult for senior officers to implement plans effectively. For example, the late decision not to match-fund all of the Standards Fund grants in 1999/2000 badly affected the planned implementation of the EDP and the staffing of the Redbridge advisory and inspection service (RAIS). There was also an undue delay in appointing a consultant to the LEA's numeracy team. The LEA has lost key posts over a number of years in an apparently *ad hoc* fashion and with little regard to the overall effectiveness of the service. These losses have been very noticeable in schools, where staff have constantly had to adjust to lower levels of support.
43. Structures for the implementation of Best Value are in place and are satisfactory. However, schools are not fully involved in the development and evaluation of LEA services and the implications of Best Value are not widely understood at school level. The Council's Best Value Performance Plan was published on time. Senior officers are well informed about the requirements of Best Value, but do not systematically provide information to schools on alternative service providers. A model statement for governing bodies has recently been provided, but none of the headteachers interviewed was fully aware of its significance.

### **Recommendations**

#### **In order to improve the LEA's partnership with schools:**

- the approach to consultation between senior officers and headteachers should provide for a more equal partnership;
- the Council should reflect the priority it claims to give to education in its spending decisions; and

- headteachers should be engaged in an analysis of all aspects of the Section 52 statement to inform a debate about the operation of the formula and possible further delegation.

**In order to improve planning for development:**

- a shared view of how the education service should move forward should be developed through the collaboration of all partners;
- the EDP should be revised to identify a smaller number of more clearly focused activities, with more explicit targeting of resources to areas of greatest need; and
- the broad pattern of post-16 course provision in schools and other issues arising from the comparatively poor progress in A Level of pupils who did well at GCSE should be addressed.

**In order to ensure a better match of resources and priorities:**

- a clear set of statements should be developed, indicating how services, especially RAIS, will be deployed to meet shared beliefs and priorities; and
- these statements should have commitment from members and the financial decision making should be speeded up and made more transparent.

## **SECTION 2: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT**

### **Implications of other functions**

44. The LEA's ability to influence school improvement is adversely affected by the fact that headteachers have had little opportunity to influence members' thinking or to shape the services on offer to them. This explains the prevailing view amongst headteachers that they have not been treated as equal partners. This said, staff in schools often value their contact with individual officers and advisers and in many instances derive benefit from their support and guidance.
45. The failure to define the nature of the partnership between schools and the LEA has stemmed not only from the attitude of some elected members, but also from a gap in leadership in education. There has been no clear overall vision for the service. Senior officers have not grasped the full implications of the Code of Practice for LEA-School Relations nor shared these sufficiently with schools. For example, there is not a sufficiently clear definition of the different roles of RAIS.
46. Communications at all levels in the authority are poor and there were numerous examples of how this diminished the extent to which all concerned identified with a common purpose. At its worst, this engenders suspicion and scepticism, as in the case of financial decision making, which lacks transparency to schools. In practice, the LEA exercises many of its functions adequately or better as the following paragraphs indicate. The problems noted above, however, obscure links between these functions and their impact on improving the performance of schools, and diminish their value in the eyes of headteachers.

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

47. The functions of monitoring, challenge, intervention and support are, in many ways, carried out satisfactorily by a core of able and committed advisers and inspectors. They are not clearly defined, however, and there is confusion about them in schools. The poor EDP consultation reflected an inability in the management of RAIS to work with headteachers towards a shared and agreed set of prioritised goals. The sheer breadth of the EDP programmes reflects an attempt to meet all aspirations without reaching a consensus on the most important. Many headteachers also appeared unaware of the need for this and of the implications for the service of the redefined role for LEAs outlined in the Code of Practice. Formal written consultation with headteachers on these implications only took place in late autumn 1999 and there was a low response rate.
48. Despite this, there have been improvements in the service in recent years. Visiting is now generally more focused and there has been an attempt to move towards more challenging relationships with schools. In RAIS and in the LEA more widely, there are advisers and officers whose support and guidance continue to be highly valued by schools. The support, for example, provided by

the primary, early years and literacy teams is effective and well regarded. There is, however, significant variation in the effectiveness of advisers more generally, especially at secondary level. The development of the service has been badly hindered by the piecemeal reduction of staffing, which has made long-term planning very difficult.

49. The partnership performance management scheme (PPMS) is the LEA's main vehicle for monitoring schools. The scheme requires the headteacher to analyse the school's performance and consider its strategies for improvement. The school's attached adviser shares the analysis and comments on the school's strategies. This joint approach leads to a final completion statement. A strength of the system is the inclusion of an element of self-review. The main weakness is that the monitoring role of the adviser is not always clear. The extent to which the adviser reviews the school's strategies varies and, in some cases, they appear to do little more than endorse the school's own view. The best practice occurs where the adviser's critical questioning moves the school's thinking forward, but the quality of this input varies.
50. The scheme aims for a differentiated approach based on need, but this was not in evidence in the schools visited. In fact, many headteachers were unclear about their allocation of adviser time under PPMS. There was a similar lack of clarity in schools about whether other adviser contacts were paid for centrally under the EDP or were part of the school's own buy-back arrangement. There is no clear, shared terminology about the different roles of individual advisers.
51. There is little shared understanding in the LEA of the purpose of challenge. Some advisers do this very well in their day to day dealings with schools. Some schools have developed a good level of challenge for themselves, and advisers wisely recognise this when appropriate. But the ability to set appropriate challenges, whether related to target setting or more generally, again varies considerably.
52. In the last academic year, the PPMS resulted in the LEA challenging a small number of schools, which had set targets below the LEA's minimum expectations of them. After discussions with their attached adviser, all of these schools matched their targets to those set by the LEA. Headteachers and governors have often not been helped sufficiently to distinguish clearly between targets based on prediction and targets that include challenge and aspiration as additional factors.
53. RAIS has not moved forward sufficiently, nor taken the schools with it, in redefining the role of advisers and inspectors more tightly to match clearly defined EDP priorities. The lack of focus in the EDP itself does not help. In their comments to the inspection team, many headteachers clearly still view RAIS in terms of support and advice across subjects and priority 5 of the EDP goes some way to reinforcing that view. Under buy-back arrangements, the service seeks to be responsive to schools' needs, but too little consideration has been given to the brokering of support from other sources.



54. Effective LEA-led practices for dissemination are beginning to develop. The Compendium of Best Practice usefully summarises where schools are able to offer support in particular areas where they have expertise. This includes, but goes much wider than, the three Beacon schools and is promising as a means of networking schools. Compendium entries are validated by advisers and often arise from the PPMS, but this fact has not been well communicated to schools. There is a perception in schools of a lack of filtering and this has hindered the compendium's use. Access via computers to the Redbridge curriculum website also enables some sharing of good practice.
55. Additional adviser support for schools in special circumstances, such as new or amalgamated schools, is effective. Meetings are well documented, lesson observations are followed by detailed written and oral feedback for the teachers, visits are recorded and recommendations clear.
56. The LEA has well defined procedures for intervention, although these are not always well communicated to all schools. One of the aims of PPMS is to provide an early warning system. Additional adviser days are available for intensive monitoring of schools where significant improvement is needed. There are clearly defined attainment triggers for intensive support and for its removal.
57. Advisers use three categories for schools, ranging from high performing to under-performing. These are allocated as part of PPMS but, contrary to notions of openness and partnership, they are not systematically shared with all schools. The main weakness in the intervention strategy at present is that headteachers are not always able to negotiate the early stages of intervention for themselves - rather it tends to be an LEA decision.

### **Collection and analysis of data**

58. A comprehensive range of local and national comparative data is provided for schools. This helpfully includes data relating to pupils from different ethnic backgrounds and, at secondary level, comparative subject data for GCSE and A level. As in other LEAs, there is currently insufficient data for special schools.
59. An acting senior adviser and a data manager are currently responsible for the collection, analysis and distribution of data. They have worked hard to develop the packages, but staff in schools have not been sufficiently influential in this process. There is currently insufficient clarity about how their work fits into a corporate strategy for the collection, analysis and publication of a range of performance data.
60. The range of data is extensive and allows schools to compare their results with groups of similar LEA schools. Otherwise, it goes little further than that which schools already have. The majority of secondary schools already undertake a detailed analysis of performance. Guidance on the use of the data is not sufficiently clear and this was confirmed by headteachers, particularly in secondary schools. Projected performance targets for schools are based on

individual pupils' performance and other data. The LEA sets minimum expectations for each school and these are set higher than the levels suggested by pupils' current rates of progress. Calculations are based on an analysis of strengths and weaknesses in individual pupil performance, which are then compared with other available data.

61. The EDP includes appropriate activities to address current shortfalls in electronic transfer of information, training for governors, monitoring of the performance of able pupils and the link between the LEA pupil performance database and the National Grid for Learning (NGfL). The LEA has already started to tackle some of these activities, but there is still much work to be done. In particular, the incompatibility of ICT systems hinders the electronic transfer of information and renders the data less amenable to detailed analyses by schools.

### **Support for literacy**

62. Support for literacy is very good. An experienced and committed literacy team is ensuring the effective implementation of the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) and the activities identified in the EDP. Teachers, particularly those in primary schools, praised the expertise, knowledge and practical advice given by the team. In the school survey, LEA support for the teaching of literacy was rated as good overall and significantly better than other LEAs surveyed. This view was confirmed by school visits.
63. The standards achieved in English at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 in 1999 were in line with the national averages and those of statistical neighbours. This has been a recurring pattern since 1995. The rate of improvement over this period has been marginally better than in schools nationally and in statistical neighbours at Key Stage 2, and marginally worse at Key Stage 1. The LEA has set a realistic and challenging target for 2002 of 82 per cent of pupils achieving level 4 or above.
64. Intensive support for lower performing primary schools during the first year of the strategy was well received, with literacy coordinators in particular valuing the additional training and school-based support they received. The Redbridge literacy initiative, which began before the implementation of the NLS, has also given an appropriate emphasis to aspects of literacy and helped to raise standards.
65. Six literacy summer schools are planned for this year, representing an appropriate extension to the LEA's support strategy. The team links well with primary advisers, taking advantage of regular meetings to exchange information about the progress of the strategy and issues emerging from monitoring visits.

### **Support for numeracy**

66. Support for numeracy has both strengths and weaknesses; it is satisfactory

overall. Classroom support in primary schools as part of the National Numeracy Strategy has been largely effective. The delay in appointing a numeracy consultant, the secondment of the mathematics adviser to an external post and the variable quality of the initial three day training programme, have hampered the early impact of the strategy. The school survey reflected the differing impact across phases: the majority of primary schools were satisfied with the support for numeracy, but the response of secondary schools was more mixed and was significantly lower overall than for secondary schools in other LEAs surveyed.

67. The standards achieved in mathematics at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 over the past five years have been broadly in line with national averages and those of statistical neighbours, but attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 improved at a faster rate between 1995 and 1999. The numeracy target of 81 per cent for 2002 is appropriately challenging.
68. Most primary numeracy coordinators and headteachers in the schools visited praised the quality of classroom support from the LEA's consultant. They received practical and realistic advice and had opportunities to observe good classroom practice. In the absence of the mathematics adviser, there is increased pressure on the LEA co-ordinator and consultant to provide the range of support necessary across the authority. Effective support for Key Stage 3 and beyond was less evident, and there was inadequate LEA support for one of the secondary schools involved in last year's summer numeracy project. There is a limited range of in-service courses supporting numeracy, although the mathematics week, organised and run in association with four neighbouring LEAs, was very helpful and of a good quality. Primary schools identified for intensive support received additional training, the majority of which was very good.

### **Support for ICT**

69. Overall, support for ICT in the curriculum is a weakness. The ICT priority in the EDP takes up considerably less RAIS time than most other priorities, and is too focused on provision. The support team is small in number and its members are involved in a wide range of other activities. There are examples of effective technical support, such as guidance to help schools set up websites, and co-ordinators are kept well informed, but there is insufficient practical support for teachers to develop classroom work with pupils. Additionally, headteachers have not been sufficiently engaged in whole school planning for ICT.
70. The EDP priority incorporates the extension of ICT resources under NGfL to all schools in an appropriate and phased approach, but NGfL planning was badly affected in Phase 3 (2000/2001), because of the Council's decision not to match fund the Standards Fund grants. NGfL is supported as a joint initiative between the ICT adviser and the IT Unit, which formerly supported ICT in school administration. This collaboration has made sensible use of available resources, but schools are confused about the respective roles of the unit and the adviser for ICT. The recent appointment of an NGfL officer has enabled a

wider range of INSET courses to be provided, but there remains an imbalance between equipping teachers with basic skills and support for their use of ICT in teaching and learning, which is insufficient. The LEA has provided clear guidance for schools concerning ICT training for teachers under the New Opportunities Fund (NOF) scheme.

71. The ICT adviser has been very active in setting up an IT curriculum website. More guidance is now needed for teachers to make productive classroom use of these materials with pupils across the curriculum. ICT co-ordinators have been appropriately trained to set up their own school websites and some schools have responded positively.
72. The schools survey indicated headteachers were generally positive about the strategy for NGfL. In contrast, support for curriculum use was viewed poorly and was significantly below the average for LEAs surveyed in both secondary and primary schools. This overall picture was confirmed during the school visits.

### **Support for schools causing concern**

73. The LEA provides effective support for schools causing concern. Procedures for identifying such schools are clear, systematic and appropriate. Work with a range of schools currently causing concern to the LEA show that procedures are carefully followed. The headteacher and chair of governors are kept fully informed through very detailed reports, which spell out weaknesses. Advisers monitor documentation with the headteacher and observe lessons; they give clear recommendations and provide class teachers with action plans where necessary. These are assiduously followed up on subsequent visits.
74. Only one school has been placed in special measures, an infants school which subsequently amalgamated; this was several years ago. The LEA's support was instrumental in helping the school to come out of special measures in about 18 months and included regular advisory visits, leading to clear, detailed reports and a review of the school's action plan. There was effective collaboration with the finance, personnel and buildings services, with representatives attending meetings of a cross-departmental support group. Since that time, the LEA has developed further its monitoring of school performance and the support for schools causing concern.

### **Support for governors**

75. Support for governors is satisfactory overall. The majority of governors felt well informed about current educational issues, via the regular flow of information from the LEA, though some thought there was an information overload. The school survey indicated that the quality of information was broadly satisfactory, although less well rated by secondary schools than in other LEAs. The clerking service was widely praised, with many schools lamenting the imminent demise of this service. Queries are dealt with appropriately and minutes circulated,

satisfactorily. Clerks were felt to be well informed and helpful.

76. The schools forum was seen as providing satisfactory opportunities for the dissemination and sharing of information, but some governors felt that dialogue with the LEA at these meetings remained limited. Termly briefing meetings for chairs and vice chairs with the CEO, however, were felt to be improving in this respect and were now seen as providing a better opportunity to discuss a wide range of issues. Communications with governors are insufficiently systematic. Written reports following advisory and other visits, for example, are not routinely shared with chairs of governing bodies.
77. The current level of staffing for governor support is unsatisfactory. The contribution of advisers for training and evaluation helps enormously, but this does not ease all the pressures on the small governor services team. The quality of the training programme for governors, provided mostly by a small core of officers and school advisers, is good, especially the induction of new governors. Training for governors is a recurring element of the EDP and governor attendance at courses is satisfactory.
78. The LEA maintains an unusual but helpful channel of communication by allowing resolutions from governing bodies to be submitted for discussion at education committee meetings. Not all resolutions are passed forward to committee, but there is sometimes a lack of feedback to the school regarding the reasons for this.

### **Support for school management**

79. The LEA provides satisfactory support for school management, mainly through the work of inspectors and advisers in RAIS. Additional management support comes via professional development courses, which are, in the main, satisfactory. Analysis of school inspection reports shows that the quality of leadership and management in primary schools is similar to other primary schools nationally. This is an improvement from the first cycle of school inspections. At secondary level, the quality of leadership and management is higher than in statistical neighbours' schools and in schools nationally.
80. Positive professional links have been established between most headteachers and their attached adviser. Headteachers often value their adviser's ability to discuss more general management issues with them. A significant feature of the advisory support for primary schools is the headship experience of primary advisers, which commands much respect from headteachers. This is less so at secondary level.
81. The LEA supports professional development opportunities for senior managers via nationally accredited courses. LEA advisers have delivered effective INSET on school self-review, based on the OFSTED Framework. Headteachers have initiated meetings at primary and secondary level. Four primary cluster groups currently exist, providing good opportunities for headteachers and deputies to discuss a range of issues, including aspects of leadership and management.

Secondary headteachers have formed their own dissemination group, in which good practice is shared and to which they invite advisers.

82. Professional development for subject leaders is more variable, but regular termly network meetings are of value. The support for teachers has focused primarily on literacy and numeracy, and in both of these national initiatives the quality of the school-based support is very good. There is a need now for networks of teachers to take more control of subject support, especially where the LEA does not have relevant expertise or where the subject is not a priority in the EDP.
83. The induction of newly qualified teachers (NQTs) is also very effective. There is a detailed programme of professional development courses for NQTs covering a range of subject and generic areas, and sufficiently balanced to meet the needs of NQTs in primary and secondary schools. Attached advisers monitor NQTs and provide good support.
84. The support for raising the quality of teaching is effective. The central INSET programme is varied and reasonably matched to the EDP, although individual courses are not explicitly linked to priorities. For example, Personal, Social and Health Education courses refer to the national framework, but not to Priority 6.

### **Support for early years education**

85. The support for early years education is very good. The Early Years Partnership resulted in an effective collaboration between the LEA and other agencies, and in the production of The Early Years Development and Childcare Plan. This is a thorough and comprehensive document. The Plan is broadly based and presents a coherent view of early years provision in Redbridge. It stresses the importance of all early years providers working in partnership. A revised document, similar in its thoroughness, has just been approved.
86. The LEA has an accelerated programme of four nursery units per year since 1995/6 and others have been recently extended to take additional pupils. All schools will have a nursery unit by September 2000. Governors and teachers in schools value this provision. The quality of advice given to schools is very good. Teachers feel that advice is practical and based on a sound philosophy that underpins good quality educational provision for young children. The contribution of the primary advisory team is also appreciated and links well to that provided by the early years specialists. In-service courses are well matched to meet the needs of those who work with young children. Recent work on early learning goals and special educational needs (SEN) is keeping Redbridge teachers in touch with national and local developments in early years education.

### **Support for music**

87. The LEA maintains strong support to schools in music. The peripatetic service for the teaching of instruments is effective. Costs are met jointly by schools

and parents but the LEA ensures that no pupil is debarred by the inability to pay. There is an instrument centre, which lends instruments and assists parents in making their own purchases. Schools are supported in running musical groups and the music centre runs a variety of choirs, orchestras and ensembles to which more able pupils can proceed. The music centre offers facilities for pupils to study music from around the world. In the schools survey, support was rated as good, and significantly better than in other LEAs surveyed.

## **Recommendations**

### **In order to clarify the LEA's roles in school improvement:**

- a more detailed explanation of how the LEA proposes to carry out its monitoring and intervention functions should be communicated to schools;
- PPMS should be developed, in consultation with headteachers and governors, to ensure closer monitoring of schools' strategies for improvement where the school's current performance suggests this to be needed.

### **In order to improve the quality of support for the collection and analysis of data and target setting:**

- schools should be more fully involved in the development of performance data and associated support.

### **In order to meet the national expectations for raising standards in numeracy:**

- the quality of support for secondary schools should be improved.

### **In order to improve standards in IT capability and the use of ICT in teaching and learning:**

- advice and support on the use of ICT in teaching and learning should be more readily available to classroom teachers;
- dialogue with schools concerning ICT development planning should more explicitly involve senior managers.

### **In order to improve the quality of support for governors:**

- the views of governors should be more systematically sought;

- feedback to governing bodies concerning their resolutions for the education committee should be more effective;
- written reports following advisory visits should be communicated directly to governors.



## **SECTION 3: STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT**

### **Corporate planning**

88. The management board, led by the Chief Executive, is the officer decision making body, responsible for advice on the strategic direction and co-ordination of the Council's policies and strategies. The previous CEO was not part of this group, although his acting successor has been a member since January. The head of this major spending service has thus only recently become involved in corporate policy making.
89. The Council has a vision statement and six clear policy priorities related to this, although these are unfamiliar to schools. The priorities form the basis of a satisfactory Best Value performance plan, but there is no single overall strategic plan. The priorities include a broad commitment to improving the standard of education as well as equal access to learning for all. Planning itself is generally clear, appropriate and feasible, with explicit links to the business plans of individual services and other corporate plans. The communication of the vision and values, however, is poor and these do not imbue the whole service.
90. The management board evaluates service plans and monitors performance by receiving information, including key service and project indicators. The corporate performance and quality sub-committee monitors policy and evaluates strategic performance, also mainly on the basis of performance indicators. Service committees are charged with reviewing provision in relation to the broad corporate priorities, but evaluation needs to be more balanced at all levels with information on the quality of service provision complementing the scrutiny of data.
91. The acting CEO, chief inspector, five senior education officers (SEOs), business manager and the heads of finance and personnel form the education service management team. Their role in respect of school improvement is clearly defined and a high priority. The chief inspector is responsible for schools support and the SEOs for five functional units: planning and provision of premises, pupils and parents, pupils and parents special needs, governors/committee service, and youth and community. This hard working team has ensured the effective day to day running of the service within a difficult corporate context.
92. The Redbridge education service business plan for 1999/2000 pulls together the main statutory plans and sets out clear and appropriate priorities for the service. Headteachers were not consulted over this first document, although there are plans to rectify this in future. It includes a vision statement for education, linked with the Council's overall vision, and identifies key values and strategic aims and objectives. It is difficult, however, to see how these can carry conviction, since they are not widely circulated, have little or no currency in schools and do not underpin the work of the service, except in the broadest of terms.

93. The Council's performance management structure has been in place for one year. In the education service, this is working at the mechanistic level, although not all staff are yet included. There is a need for key overall goals to be more closely translated into targets for teams and individuals and for these to become a more central feature of the twice-yearly reviews for individuals.
94. At member level, the speed and openness of financial decision-making and consultation on the planning of the education budget are significant weaknesses, although consultation has improved in respect of additional delegation under Fair Funding. Headteachers and governors have insufficient opportunity to influence priorities at an early stage. Final decisions on the budget are taken in March so that schools receive their allocation only a few days before the start of the new financial year. No earlier indicative budgets are given to schools, making it difficult for them to plan properly for the next academic year's staffing. The Council has begun to develop a medium-term budget strategy covering three financial years. This is an appropriate response to the current situation under which the Council debates and decides proposals contained in budgets developed independently by each of the three main political groups on an annual basis. Budgetary problems sometimes place senior officers in a difficult position and undermine schools' confidence in them. For example, late budget changes in 1999/2000 stemmed from the Council's decision not to match fund the Standards Fund bids underpinning the EDP.
95. The failure of members to make timely and well-informed decisions and an *ad hoc* approach to planning have coloured much of the work of the education service. Headteachers have little or no contact with elected members and little influence on decision making, even when members are school governors. There are examples of negative relationships between schools and elected members. Paradoxically, members, especially those on the education committee, are proud of the schools' achievements and want to do their best for the service. In spite of the recent structural change and the revised procedures for appointing the new CEO, this aspiration will not be met until they radically reappraise their relationship with schools. Furthermore, they will need to take care that the imminent modernisation of the Council does not divert their focus away from this major repair task.
96. There has been too little effective communication between members and senior officers. One important effect of this, combined with the previous structure, has been that the CEO has not been party to the debate about spending decisions against the SSA. The member who was chair of the education committee at the start of the inspection was aware of this problem and was seeking to set up more regular meetings with senior officers. In addition, he visited the education offices weekly with the express purpose of being available to staff wishing to discuss matters with him. These are important steps, but the problem goes deeper than this. What is needed is a change in the culture of working relationships so that members and officers work more closely in a spirit of collaboration towards agreed ends.

97. The LEA's work with other agencies has been largely positive. The lifelong learning development partnership co-ordinates and develops opportunities for education, training and community learning and is involved in the single regeneration budget (SRB) inclusion projects in Redbridge. The EYDCP works well with its key partners: the Redbridge Health Authority, the NHS Trust and Redbridge Council for Voluntary service. The LEA has worked co-operatively with the Redbridge Business Education Partnership (ReBEP) on numerous projects including the development of business links with schools; for example they arranged for employers to support the summer numeracy projects. The education welfare service (EWS) works closely with the police. As well as taking part in an annual Truancy Watch, the police maintain link officers in schools and work jointly with the service on courses and packages regarding, for example, drugs, bullying and child protection.
98. There are excellent and constructive relationships with Diocesan representatives from the Anglican, Roman Catholic and Jewish communities. Joint responsibility for the authority's voluntary aided schools works very well. There is very effective collaboration and consultation regarding the Agreed Syllabus for religious education.

### **Schools infrastructure**

99. The client orientation of management services is improving, but the quality of support varies, both within and between functions. Services for education are provided by staff located in a number of corporate service areas. The LEA is currently employing an external consultant to review the trading agreements between service areas and to benchmark charges against other LEAs. Key staff within each function specialise in education work and are familiar with the needs of schools.
100. The consultations on further delegation under Fair Funding were valuable for all parties. The work was well coordinated by an officer group chaired by a corporate director. Headteachers served on a number of task groups and worked with individual service managers to analyse the range, quality and cost of existing services. Some of the agreements under which schools buy back services lack sufficient customer focus, and opportunities to help schools adopt Best Value approaches were missed. Apart from personnel services, the documentation does not make clear what services will continue to be provided without charge from the non-delegated budget, making it difficult for schools to seek offers from other providers. Few of the agreements include performance standards such as target response times with penalties for non-delivery. Although charges for the core services generally match the additional funds delegated through the formula, schools were required to make buy-back decisions before they were notified of their budgets. Schools are not presented with an integrated service with common arrangements for ordering, payments and quality assurance.
101. Advice to managers on finance is good. Officers know their schools and maintain close personal contact. The prime responsibility for managing

budgets is appropriately placed with schools. Schools have recently been provided with a comprehensive finance guide containing model procedures, which they can adapt for their own use. Secondary schools have recently been provided with comparative data on school spending patterns, but, in common with other support services, the Finance Services Area has not been proactive in supplying benchmarked information to all schools.

102. The late confirmation of budgets is unsatisfactory. Schools currently receive a helpful budget planning spreadsheet and details of staff salaries and on-costs. However, they do not receive sufficiently early indicative budgets, nor have an early opportunity to check the roll and other data that will be used to calculate their formula allocation. Indicative budgets would help restore schools' confidence in the budget-setting process and reduce some of the uncertainty which leads primary schools in particular to seek added security through large reserves. At the end of 1998/99 nearly half the primary schools had surpluses in excess of five per cent, despite the low level of funding per pupil compared with primary schools in similar LEAs.
103. The internal audit service is a strength. All schools receive an annual visit with a full audit every four years, which is followed up promptly with a detailed management report and action plan.
104. Support provided by Personnel Services is variable though satisfactory overall and developing. There are comprehensive guidance materials and regular newsletters covering both general and education-specific issues. Advice from senior staff is well regarded, but a number of headteachers quoted examples of poor service on more routine tasks. There is both the will and a determination to improve.
105. The Recruitment Service for NQTs is very effective. Presentations to students and the success of Redbridge schools have attracted NQTs. Schools have been able, therefore, to recruit sufficient primary teachers of good quality without the LEA having to offer enticements at the same level as some neighbouring boroughs.
106. ICT support for school administration has lacked investment and strategic direction. The helpdesk support service is satisfactory and a range of training courses are offered for school administrative staff. Early systems provided by the Council have become out-dated. In the absence of a clear recommendation from the LEA, schools have pursued their own hardware and software solutions. The existing e-mail service is unreliable and there is no on-line transfer of management information.
107. Slow progress has been made with the development of the LEA's Asset Management Plan. Full condition surveys were conducted during the autumn term and information provided to the DfEE on time. However, schools have only recently been able to take account of the findings in planning their own maintenance programmes because there was a long delay in distributing the survey information. At the time of the inspection the LEA was still considering

its approach to suitability, so work on the plan risks falling further behind schedule. Members take a keen interest in building projects through the Education (Buildings and Development) Sub-Committee. Senior officers are active in visiting schools to discuss their needs, but the criteria used to prioritise projects are unclear to schools.

108. The standard of school premises was felt to be satisfactory or better in the majority of primary and secondary schools. Despite the pressures, the LEA has successfully avoided extensive use of temporary accommodation. The design work by the LEA's architects is imaginative and has taken account of the views of governing bodies. Opportunities have often been taken to remodel teaching areas within existing premises alongside the extensions to some schools.
109. Support for schools with their building repair and maintenance responsibilities provided by the construction services area is broadly satisfactory, although there are examples of poor progress chasing. Service quality during the first year of buy-back was evaluated and changes made to the charging structure. The emergency service provided by the in-house contractor is valued. Contract management and client support for cleaning and grounds maintenance were rated poor or very poor in the school survey by about two-thirds of secondary and about a third of primary schools. The client and purchasing service area's supervision of the catering contract and the procurement of school transport are satisfactory.

### **Recommendations**

#### **In order to promote more productive relationships between Council members and schools:**

- more effective channels of communication should be developed between members, senior officers and headteachers;
- budget consultation should be earlier and more responsive, including indicative budgets ahead of final decisions;
- financial decision making should be speeded up and made more transparent.

#### **In order to improve management services:**

- service agreements should be presented as an integrated package in a common format, with the opportunity for schools to tailor service levels to their needs and/or to use alternative suppliers.

## **SECTION 4: SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL PROVISION**

### **Strategy**

110. The strategy for SEN is weak. It is not based on a recent audit of needs, nor articulated sufficiently precisely and comprehensively to determine the future shape of SEN provision and provide a clear frame of reference for developments. The majority of schools consulted were keenly aware of this. The broad procedural guidance for schools and LEA staff is up to date and helpful, as is the published guidance on SEN for parents. However, the last major policy revision was in 1996. The EDP and other current plans tend to be too broad and, with some exceptions, they reflect the existing situation rather than focusing sharply on priorities for development.
111. The service has been operating under considerable strain. There have been vacancies and lost posts at all levels, with senior posts filled temporarily, middle managers doubling-up on roles and a loss of capacity in vital areas such as SEN advice and educational psychology. These problems have resulted in considerable loss of confidence in schools, despite the respect accorded by most mainstream schools to the great majority of SEN personnel, and the good work being done on the ground in many areas. The last two factors mean that the SEN service is continuing to function reasonably well and that it still has the capacity to develop and improve, provided that the staffing issues are resolved speedily.
112. Chief among the characteristic strengths of the SEN provision is the development of outreach services based on the special schools and special facilities within mainstream schools (referred to elsewhere as units). These were initiated by officers as long ago as 1991 and led up to the recent establishment of a unit, at one of the high schools, for meeting the spectrum of autistic needs. Outreach is proving an effective means of supporting inclusion. The main weakness is that there is no clear inclusion policy. In the prevailing managerial environment, the special schools feel that they are leading the LEA. Coupled with the inadequate admissions criteria for some of the facilities, this means that they are sometimes unsure of their position and are inhibited from developing with confidence.

### **Statutory obligations**

113. The LEA takes reasonable steps to meet its statutory obligations. There is considerable emphasis on identifying need early and the educational psychology service (EPS) has contributed strongly to this. School special educational needs coordinators (SENCO's) have been involved in developing the use of baseline assessment for this purpose. A satisfactory system is in place for pre-school referrals.
114. Statements are produced in a reasonably timely fashion. The proportion produced within the recommended 18 weeks, allowing for statutory exceptions, improved sharply between 1997 and 1999, when they just exceeded the

national average. While there is ample room for further improvement, very few schools feel that there is undue delay. The SEN Panel meets frequently and responds quickly. Educational psychologists (EPs) in most cases make prompt assessments. The generally good relationships with the social and health services are helping to bring in reports on time. The quality of statements has been satisfactory, but the new policy for sharpening objectives and improving the guidance on teaching methods, the product of a working party over the last year, is bringing about improvements.

115. The LEA issues prompt reminders of annual and transition reviews. There is considerable variation in the extent of attendance by EPs, and it is rare for other officers to be present. This means that there is little opportunity for the LEA to monitor or moderate the outcomes. It is common practice for the LEA to issue an amending note when a change in a statement has been agreed; a revised statement would be more appropriate. The LEA facilitates appeals tribunals but it is very conscientious in trying to find solutions acceptable to parents. On the few occasions when appeals are made, in approximately half the cases, parents have decided to withdraw.
116. The LEA's emphasis is shifting towards supporting the work of mainstream schools before statementing becomes necessary. EPs give good advice, keep files systematically, review cases regularly and consult well with parents. Some schools have experienced discontinuity because of a lack of cover and EPs rarely have time to make a contribution to school-based INSET. The outreach support is very significant at this stage and most of it is of good quality. Schools particularly praise the support for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD), which includes a variety of assistance to teachers and pupils. There are, however, waiting lists and there is potential for extending the support to statemented pupils in the mainstream. In the absence of a comprehensive inclusion policy it is not clear how pupils in EBD special schools are to be reintegrated into mainstream schools when they are ready, especially at the point of transfer to secondary level.
117. There is a sufficient range of provision for meeting SEN in the special schools and units, including some out-borough provision, but, as in many areas, there is a shortage of support for speech and language difficulties. The specialist provision as a whole needs to be the subject of an overall plan, with clear admissions criteria for each establishment, and indicating where rationalisation is required.
118. Consultations with parents are mostly satisfactory, with relatively few individual anxieties expressed. The Parents in Partnership which had formerly found its membership of the education umbrella group frustrating is now developing good working relationships with officers.

### **Improvement and value for money**

119. The LEA gives satisfactory value for money in meeting SEN. It has successfully regulated the application of the Code of Practice for SEN. The

percentage of pupils with statements is well below that in both Outer London and nationally and nearly all pupils in special schools and units have statements. The majority of schools are sufficiently well funded for SEN generally and the funds delegated to meet statements are generally sufficient. The formula is fair and transparent. A minority of schools found that the reduction in delegated funding for statementing left them unable to meet full costs without supplementing them from elsewhere in their budgets.

120. There is considerable investment in accommodation and resources at special schools and units, and they are well funded. A consequence of the imprecise strategy is that funding implications are not always fully thought through for special schools and units, so that time can be wasted on excessive negotiation and allocations arrive late. Centrally held services are distributed fairly according to need, although the formula is not clear to schools. The annual monitoring forms returned by schools help in reviewing practices but their potential for financial auditing and reviewing the cost effectiveness of expenditure is not fully exploited. Schools receive little or no feedback on this monitoring at present.
121. The LEA makes a satisfactory contribution to improving mainstream schools' capacity to provide for SEN, despite the staffing situation. Schools receive good quality advice on request, though it is sometimes slow to access because of the shortage of staff. There is good training, especially for SENCOs and learning support assistants. A valuable research project on learning mechanisms, 'Learning to Learn', is in progress in five schools. SENCOs are kept well informed of local and national issues through cluster group meetings and an informative magazine. The LEA has only limited capacity to assure quality in the special schools and units and to assist in target setting. It needs to look farther afield for more specialised support.

## **Analysis**

122. Practice on the ground is good in many respects. The generally satisfactory provision has been achieved as a result of the foresight and initiative of officers in the past and the efforts of current staff to maintain and develop practice, despite considerable strains. Other important factors include imaginative developments and enterprise in the special schools, an effective partnership with SENCOs and other staff in mainstream schools, and effective INSET. The LEA is managing, despite its difficulties, to move forward in some significant areas, such as improving the statements and statementing procedures, and enhancing work at earlier stages of the Code of Practice.
123. The weaknesses arise principally from the strains consequent on long unfilled vacancies and a degree of under-staffing. These led, in turn, to a lack of overarching, well-focussed, central planning to maintain and steer developments. The stresses are manifest at all levels and prevent the service from achieving its clear potential.



## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

- the LEA strategy should be based on an audit of needs, made more explicit, with a comprehensive and resourced policy for inclusion.

### **In order to improve the delivery of SEN services:**

- staffing should be reviewed, especially with a view to improving the capacity for policy making, providing more continuity in the EPS and meeting the need for EBD support;
- there should be more consistent attendance of LEA personnel at annual and transition reviews.

### **In order to improve the monitoring of SEN:**

- there should be more emphasis on cost effectiveness, and feedback to schools on the analysis of the school returns;
- the adequacy and use of delegated funding for meeting statements should be included in the monitoring.

## **SECTION 5: ACCESS**

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

124. The LEA's response to the challenge of a rising school population and large cross-borough movements of pupils has been satisfactory. The percentages of surplus places, particularly in the secondary phase, are well below the averages for other LEAs. Indeed, compared with capacities, there is currently a net shortfall of places in both the primary and secondary phases. Progress in reducing infant class sizes is on schedule and a long-standing commitment to provide a nursery at every primary school will also be completed this year.
125. The School Organisation Plan was agreed after appropriate consultation. The Plan requires minor development to meet DfEE guidelines in full, particularly in respect of SEN and community use. Nevertheless, it provides a clear analysis of the challenges facing the LEA over the next five years. The accuracy of the LEA's forecasting of overall school rolls has improved and is within Audit Commission guidelines.
126. The high performance of Redbridge schools makes them increasingly popular with parents from neighbouring LEAs; 17 per cent of pupils in secondary schools live outside the borough. Staying-on rates to sixth forms are rising rapidly. The availability of sites for new schools is limited.
127. Until now the growth in secondary rolls has been accommodated by adding forms of entry to existing schools. A new PFI-funded secondary school on a green field site is planned for September 2001. Discussions with possible partners are at an advanced stage and a headteacher has been appointed. The timetable provides just five months between the contractors moving onto the site and the first pupils arriving. The LEA has no firm contingency plans for the pupils' education in the event that this deadline is not met.

### **Admissions**

128. Given the complexity of the situation, admissions to schools are satisfactory. The shortfall in overall places, the large inward movement of pupils, high mobility in some parts of the borough, liaison with five denominational or foundation schools, together with the assessment of pupils for the two grammar schools presents a formidable challenge for the small central team. Team members have a clear customer focus with parents, but are sensitive to difficulties of over-subscribed schools.
129. The admissions booklets for parents are well presented and widely circulated. Posters about enrolling children at schools are published in seven languages. The LEA uses a language line service where interpretation is needed to give advice. An Admissions Forum is being established which will review the co-ordination of admission arrangements between the different admissions authorities. Primary and secondary admissions are currently based on catchment areas, which are kept under review with the help of a computerised

pupil database and mapping system. Despite the shortfall in places and wide variations in the popularity of schools, the proportion of parents receiving a place at their preferred school is above the national average. The LEA arrangements for appeals are thorough and the number found in favour of parents is low in comparison with other LEAs. Appeals are heard within DfEE timescales, but outside the good practice guidelines set by the Audit Commission. The assessment of pupils for the grammar schools is efficiently organised by the LEA.

130. Planning for the admission of pupils to the new secondary school is good. The new catchment area has been agreed in consultation with neighbouring schools. Appropriate arrangements have been made to inform parents in the area affected. Plans to publicise the new school and run open evenings for prospective applicants are in hand.

### **Provision for education otherwise than at school**

131. There is a satisfactory system for monitoring the education of pupils otherwise than at school, principally at home. The pupils are identified and carefully tracked by the attendance officer in collaboration with the EWS and Redbridge advice and information service (RAIS) notified of new cases. A co-ordinating adviser assigns cases to colleagues who make termly visits, following DfEE guidelines and issuing reports, which include useful recommendations. Every effort is made to maintain a continuous and fruitful working relationship with the parents or other provider. While the approach is sufficient in practice, it is not comprehensively documented and Priority 4 of the EDP indicates that the LEA intends, quite properly, to formalise it in the current year.
132. The needs of pupils not attending ordinary schools for medical and other reasons, excepting exclusion, are systematically assessed and addressed by the tuition service (see also Behaviour Support below), which makes suitable arrangements for tuition at home or in hospital. The service is also able to provide tuition in ordinary schools when pupils are able to return but still require extra support.

### **Attendance**

133. The LEA is working steadily to improve attendance. Attendance rates compare well with similar authorities and, over the last three years, have improved slightly in primary schools and more significantly in secondary schools. Priority 4 of the EDP indicates a gradual refinement of procedures over the next three years, although without setting numerical targets, concentrating on areas of difficulty such as holidays in term time. There have been recent cooperative efforts with schools to reduce the latter, with measurable benefits.
134. The EWS is a well-organised service, concentrating its efforts on enforcing and improving attendance in schools. Visits to schools are made regularly, the time allocated according to need, and there are well defined procedures and responsibilities. They are applied sensitively and without undue bureaucracy

so that the service is productive. The schools visited mostly praised highly their assigned educational welfare officer (EWO), although there were isolated concerns about individuals and the difficulty of enforcing attendance where pupils are from other boroughs.

### **Behaviour support**

135. Support to schools in managing behaviour at Key Stages 1 to 3 is good overall and there are satisfactory arrangements for reintegrating pupils who are excluded in this age range. Good provision is made for pupils who are excluded at Key Stage 4. The behaviour support plan is satisfactory, setting out the generally sound approaches, which reflect the current practice. It is consistent with the EDP. However, the school survey shows that many schools believe the LEA's support to be inadequate. At least in part, this is because the LEA has not carried the schools with it in its thinking. In spite of consultation, many headteachers felt they had little involvement in formulating the behaviour support plan.
136. The proportion of permanent exclusions up to the end of 1998/99 was substantially below that in similar LEAs and nationally. These have since risen in primary schools to nearly the national rate. Although they have also risen in secondary schools, they remain well below the rates nationally and in similar LEAs. There were 33 permanent exclusions last year and the target is to reduce them by one each year.
137. At Key Stages 1 to 3 there is a strong and appropriate emphasis on reintegration. Excluded pupils and others not at school are referred for assessment to the tuition service, which has a broader role than its name would suggest, some of its functions being similar to those of a PRU. The service has its own classrooms in which pupils may be educated in the short term. In cooperation with the exclusions officer, the service aims to place pupils appropriately in a mainstream or special school as soon as possible. The tuition service fulfils a useful and flexible role, but, in common with similar services elsewhere in the country, its precise status is unclear and should be kept under review. There is an agreement with secondary schools, subject to statutory admissions policies, to accept a fair proportion of excluded pupils and this is helpful in many instances.
138. The PRU caters for excluded pupils at Key Stage 4 and is a marked strength of the LEA. It is imaginatively led and provides a very good service. Its policy is to insist rigorously on good attendance and achievement within an academic curriculum. It has developed well-respected strengths in areas such as art and digital photography. It has good links with the Redbridge College, which provides some practical courses, the ReBEP for work experience and the careers service regarding work placements and other leavers' destinations.
139. Support for behaviour management is provided by the outreach service of one of the LEA's special schools. This is effective with individual pupils and at class and whole-school level and is often a key factor in preventing exclusions. The

service is highly valued, the only reservation being that it is not sufficiently well resourced to meet all requests from schools as quickly as they would wish. Its role as the LEA's *de facto* behaviour support service, as well as that described earlier in relation to EBD referrals, has evolved substantially through its own worthwhile initiatives. It is now time for the LEA to define more clearly the role of the Outreach Service.

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

140. There is a good quality action plan mapping out the authority's provision and intentions. The school survey indicates that schools consider that child protection is well supported. The EWS has close working relationships with the children and families service regarding child protection, acting as an intermediary for schools to ensure a speedy response when intervention by social workers is required. There have been joint visits to schools to improve understanding of their respective roles. The evidence of the school visits is that the arrangements are effective with only occasional reports of frustrating delays of postponed case conferences. Officers from each service cooperate well in the training of school and office staff in child protection matters. Headteachers are represented on the area child protection committee.
141. Arrangements for health and safety in schools are unusually thorough, with regular meetings of school coordinators reporting, in turn, to a strategy group. There are regular first aid courses and immediate advice is available on a helpline. Incidents are reported promptly by schools and are carefully analysed.
142. There are annual audits by the LEA in every school when the school's own procedures are examined. In most cases the schools visited confirmed the indications of the survey that the system is thorough. However one school visit revealed examples of outstanding safety problems, indicating that there is room for a yet more rigorous approach in selected cases.

### **Children in public care**

143. Good progress has been made towards raising awareness of the need to monitor the achievement of children in public care through a multi-agency approach coordinated by the principal EWO. A database has been assembled with full details, including attainments, of the 142 children concerned. It is common to both the education and children and families services. The only data still to be obtained is the attainment of some of the children educated out of the borough, and this will be the first priority of a newly appointed officer.
144. Members are aware of their responsibility. Some of them regularly visit the two residential homes in the borough and there are proposals for a members' group for children in public care to monitor provision on the Council's behalf.

## **Minority ethnic children (including Travellers)**

145. There is good provision for raising the achievement of minority ethnic pupils. The Action Plan for the Ethnic Minority and Travellers Achievement Grant (EMTAG) is well founded on a thorough analysis of attainment data set against ethnicity. Groups of pupils have been identified for additional support and reasonable targets have been set for each group. There is little provision designed specifically for Travellers' children, of whom there are currently 23 in the borough, and improved guidance in this regard is part of the Plan.
146. The minority ethnic achievement service (MEAS) is well managed and offers a good range of staff training and guidance to schools. It makes useful teaching materials available and arranges for teachers of education as an additional language (EAL) and bilingual support assistants to work in schools. When the bulk of funding was devolved to schools at the start of the year, all but seven schools bought back the service at their former level. This mark of confidence was reflected in the favourable views presented in the school survey and on visits. A strength of the MEAS approach is that teachers are selected for their good track record and then well trained. The great majority perform well, but with a few exceptions. Monitoring of their performance needs to be adjusted to recognise the changing responsibilities for employing the teachers.

## **School improvement**

147. Redbridge's measures to provide access to education for all pupils are satisfactory or better. A number of features contribute particularly effectively to raising achievements in schools more generally, not least the successes in maintaining satisfactory attendance and low exclusion rates. The early identification of special needs promises to give more pupils the best possible start. The generally good outreach support of the special schools and units and the equally good support from MEAS enable more pupils to make their contribution to standards within the mainstream. The teachers of both services contribute in their respective fields as well as in the planning of the work for whole classes. Credit is due to the LEA staff working in direct contact with pupils and teachers, and to the schools themselves.

## **Social exclusion**

148. The LEA has effective measures in place to combat social exclusion. As well as its effective support for improving attendance and behaviour, it has made a good response to the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry. A procedure for recording and analysing all racial incidents is well under way. A working group of headteachers with the head of MEAS has been established to develop an action plan to promote the Commission for Racial Equality standards.
149. Under EMTAG funding, achievement and exclusions are analysed by ethnicity for all schools. During the current financial year, there are projects in four schools in order to raise the achievement and prevent the exclusion of Black pupils. This is a well-chosen priority. The LEA supports homework clubs in

several schools to assist pupils whose home circumstances would otherwise make homework difficult. A 0.6 Refugee Co-ordinator post is currently vacant, although a previous post holder is fulfilling some of the duties on a part-time basis. A group of MEAS teachers is working together to develop a teaching pack on refugees in years 9 and 10, as part of a PSHE or humanities module.

150. With SRB funding, an imaginative scheme, in collaboration with West Ham Football Club, provides helpful mentoring for students at risk, with football as its starting point.

## **APPENDIX: RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **In order to improve the LEA's partnership with schools:**

- the approach to consultation between senior officers and headteachers should provide for a more equal partnership;
- the Council should reflect the priority it claims to give to education in its spending decisions; and
- headteachers should be engaged in an analysis of all aspects of the Section 52 statement to inform a debate about the operation of the formula and possible further delegation.

### **In order to improve planning for development:**

- a shared view of how the education service should move forward should be developed through the collaboration of all partners;
- the EDP should be revised to identify a smaller number of more clearly focused activities, with more explicit targeting of resources to areas of greatest need; and
- the broad pattern of post-16 course provision in schools and other issues arising from the comparatively poor progress in A Level of pupils who did well at GCSE should be addressed.

### **In order to ensure a better match of resources and priorities:**

- a clear set of statements should be developed, indicating how services, especially RAIS, will be deployed to meet shared beliefs and priorities; and
- these statements should have commitment from members and the financial decision making should be speeded up and made more transparent.

### **In order to clarify the LEA's roles in school improvement:**

- a more detailed explanation of how the LEA proposes to carry out its monitoring and intervention functions should be communicated to schools;
- PPMS should be developed, in consultation with headteachers and governors, to ensure closer monitoring of schools' strategies for improvement where the school's current performance suggests this to be needed.



**In order to promote more productive relationships between Council members and schools:**

- more effective channels of communication should be developed between members, senior officers and headteachers;
- budget consultation should be earlier and more responsive, including indicative budgets ahead of final decisions;
- financial decision making should be speeded up and made more transparent.

**In order to improve management services:**

- service agreements should be presented as an integrated package in a common format, with the opportunity for schools to tailor service levels to their needs and/or to use alternative suppliers.

**In order to improve the quality of support for the collection and analysis of data and target setting:**

- schools should be more fully involved in the development of performance data and associated support.

**In order to meet the national expectations for raising standards in numeracy:**

- the quality of support for secondary schools should be improved.

**In order to improve standards in IT capability and the use of ICT in teaching and learning:**

- advice and support on the use of ICT in teaching and learning should be more readily available to classroom teachers;
- dialogue with schools concerning ICT development planning should more explicitly involve senior managers.

**In order to improve the quality of support for governors:**

- the views of governors should be more systematically sought;
- feedback to governing bodies concerning their resolutions for the education committee should be more effective;

- written reports following advisory visits should be communicated directly to governors.

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

- the LEA strategy should be based on an audit of needs, made more explicit, with a comprehensive and resourced policy for inclusion.

**In order to improve the delivery of SEN services:**

- staffing should be reviewed, especially with a view to improving the capacity for policy making, providing more continuity in the EPS and meeting the need for EBD support;
- there should be more consistent attendance of LEA personnel at annual and transition reviews.

**In order to improve the monitoring of SEN:**

- there should be more emphasis on cost effectiveness, and feedback to schools on the analysis of the school returns;
- the adequacy and use of delegated funding for meeting statements should be included in the monitoring.

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