

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of Provider: London Borough of Redbridge
Date of visit: Wednesday 9 May 2007

Context

This inspection follows the inspection in April 2005, at which London Borough of Redbridge was graded as satisfactory for leadership and management and quality improvement. The arrangements for equality of opportunity were good. Provision was judged to be outstanding in information and communications technology (ICT) and good in health, social care and public services, and visual and performing arts and media. Provision in hospitality, sport, leisure and travel and family learning was satisfactory. English, languages and communications and foundation programmes were inadequate, but judged to be satisfactory at the subsequent reinspection in May 2006. Redbridge continues to operate a scheme of delegation with Redbridge Institute of Adult Education (RIAE) to govern, manage and deliver most of its adult and community learning provision. RIAE has entered into a partnership with a subsidiary of Redbridge College to deliver level 2 and level 3 training for employees in literacy and numeracy, counselling and teaching assistants.

Achievement and standards

What improvements have been made to retention rates, success rates and attendance rates, all of which were identified as areas for improvement in a number of sector subject areas at the previous inspections?	Reasonable progress
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RIAE has made reasonable progress towards improving retention, success and attendance rates since the previous inspection. The overall retention rate has improved from 84% in 2003-04 to 86% in 2005-06. In 2006-07 to date, retention rates for completed courses in most sector subject areas are over 80%, and above 90% in some. However, poor retention rates remain an area for improvement in some modern foreign language and literacy and numeracy courses. In 2005-06, the overall retention and success rates for long accredited courses were, respectively, 87% and 69%. For non-accredited courses, the overall retention rate was 83% and the success rate was 78%.

Success rates are good for a number of courses in childcare, counselling, ICT and some areas of preparation for life and work. However, they are poor in a number of courses in arts, media and publishing and modern foreign languages. In 2005-06, success rates for AS levels in art, media and publishing and modern foreign languages were, respectively, 33% and 47%. Attendance rates are satisfactory overall. They have improved significantly in literacy, numeracy and independent living and leisure skills but have shown little improvement in sport and leisure, modern foreign languages and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses.

At the previous inspections, planning for individual learning and target-setting for learners were identified as areas for improvement in a number of sector subject areas. How effectively have these issues been resolved?	Reasonable progress
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Insufficient focus on different aspects of individual learning was identified as an area for improvement in most sector subject areas at the previous inspections. Planning for individual learning and target-setting have improved on many courses and are now satisfactory. Tutors have a positive approach to setting targets for learners and monitoring their progress, particularly on non-accredited courses. Managers have consulted staff on the development of new and revised paperwork and carried out useful training. Tutors identify course aims and objectives for all programmes and most assess learners' prior attainment and experience when they start a course. Learners in some sector subject areas are asked to carry out a task to assess their level of skills. Tutors identify learners' individual learning outcomes on many courses but these are not always sufficiently detailed. Many tutors assess learners' achievements and progress in each of the learning sessions or for each of the course objectives, but do not focus sufficiently on their progress towards achieving their individual learning outcomes. Some tutors link targets well to learners' personal goals and have developed successful ways to monitor learners' progress. The sharing of good practice in assessment practices is improving.

In what ways has the system for observing teaching and learning been improved to evaluate the quality of provision?	Significant progress
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Significant progress has been made to improve the system for observing teaching and learning, which was judged to be comprehensive at the previous inspection. The system now has better links with continuing staff development. In most curriculum areas, the process brings together a range of information, such as observations and course evaluations effectively to provide detailed development plans for tutors. Tutors are very positive about the process, which they find supportive and useful.

The system is linked well to important developments in the curriculum. For example, the effects of a significant investment in interactive whiteboards, internet connections and training have been examined in detail in lesson observations. Following this initiative, some additional development needs have been identified and provided. Work with other local boroughs is improving the confidence and objectivity of observers and the quality of the observation reports. Training on post-observation action-planning has helped to bring about improvements. The proportion of inadequate lessons has reduced significantly over the past three years, from 17% at the time of the previous full inspection, to 8% in 2005-06 and 2% in the current year. The proportion of good or better lessons increased from 50% at the time of the inspection to 54% in 2005-06, and currently stands at 74% for observations up to the mid point of the current year.

Leadership and management

The reinspection report identified that the skills for life strategy was insufficiently developed. What improvements have been made?	Reasonable progress
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RIAE has worked closely with other sections of the council to identify a range of literacy, numeracy and language needs in local communities, particularly those in disadvantaged areas of the borough. Further research is being carried out to assess the employability skills requirements of local residents and employers. A draft strategy has now been written, which should be in place later in the year following a review by appropriate bodies in Redbridge. Although a formal strategy has not yet been published, some new developments have been implemented. New literacy, numeracy and ESOL courses have been introduced in disadvantaged areas of the borough. Innovative work has been carried out with local libraries. The provision of additional language support on vocational courses has improved, however, the identification of learners' additional literacy and numeracy support needs is insufficient in some curriculum areas.

The previous inspection, and RIAE's quality improvement plan, judged that there was insufficient use of data to monitor and evaluate provision. In what ways has this been improved?	Reasonable progress
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At the previous inspection, RIAE did not use data to monitor and evaluate provision sufficiently. The use and reliability of data have now improved. Managers have access to regular performance reports and can obtain any other data easily from the management information department. Training has been carried out in the use of data and staff are supported well to improve their self-confidence in analysing and monitoring performance. The availability and use of important performance indicators such as success and achievement rates is still under-developed.

Managers and tutors make satisfactory use of other information, including learner satisfaction surveys and the outcome of observations of teaching and learning. Class cancellations are monitored appropriately. The governing body receives useful data reports to review, but these do not always include information about achievement and success rates. Additional data is available in curriculum areas and is used extensively in some cases to monitor tutors' performance and to assist in curriculum planning. The monitoring of the performance of minority ethnic groups has improved. The main focus is on participation rates, but the monitoring of the performance of different minority ethnic groups is also carried out where there are viable numbers. Target-setting at strategic level is insufficient.

How is the internal review system helping to bring about quality improvement?	Significant Progress
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The internal review system has been in place for more than five years and involves RIAE's staff and external advisers. It has a significant influence on improving the quality of provision. In 2005-06, the two sector subject areas that were judged to be inadequate at inspection were chosen for review. Teaching and learning improved over the course of the year and both areas had improved at the reinspection. The reviews are particularly helpful to managers in clarifying and setting standards during lesson observations and in sharing good practice. The use of external consultants assists in ensuring that RIAE is able to maintain common standards with other providers, and alerts staff to other good practice. Where concerns are identified during internal reviews, they are rectified quickly.

The self-assessment process was judged to be satisfactory at the previous inspection. To what extent has it improved?	Significant progress
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At the previous inspection, the self-assessment process was judged to be satisfactory. There were considerable variations in the quality and accuracy of the self-assessment report across the sector subject areas. Significant progress has been made to ensure greater consistency in the accuracy of the judgements in the most recent self-assessment report. Staff involvement in the process is good. Tutors carry out detailed and evaluative course reviews which are validated by curriculum managers. Teaching and learning advisers follow up any incomplete course reviews and any that are insufficiently evaluative. Curriculum managers use course reviews, learners' feedback and satisfaction surveys to write self-assessment reports for all curriculum areas. Members of the governing body are linked with individual curriculum managers to ensure the process is self-critical and thorough. The final curriculum reports are moderated by a performance review board that includes learner and staff representatives and external partners.

The draft self-assessment report for 2006-07 contains judgements on each of the business support areas which have been used already to bring about improvements in the support provided for curriculum areas. The use of data to support judgements has improved. The monitoring of the quality improvement plan is integrated well with the curriculum review process. The plan is updated regularly. The most recent self-assessment report is detailed and evaluative. The grades are an accurate reflection of the strengths and weaknesses identified in each curriculum area and in leadership and management.