

## MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of college: Redbridge College

Date of visit: 23 June 2009

### Context

Redbridge College is a medium-sized general further education (GFE) college based on one main site at Little Heath in the London borough of Redbridge and a second site in Ilford town centre. Redbridge operates a partly selective system of secondary schooling and all local schools have their own sixth form. The nearest similar colleges are Barking and Dagenham, Havering and Newham. The college has grown significantly in recent years. It has revised its curriculum offer recently and is now virtually a wholly vocational college. The college attracts students from a very wide range of ethnic backgrounds. Most of its students are aged 16 to 19.

The college's last full inspection was in January 2007. Effectiveness of provision was satisfactory, as were achievement and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management. Capacity to improve was judged to be good. The curriculum areas inspected were either graded as good or satisfactory with the exception of health and social care, and business and administration which were unsatisfactory. In the reinspection carried out in July 2008, health and social care was judged to be satisfactory and business was judged to be good.

### Achievement and standards

How much progress has the College made in improving long course success rates?	Reasonable progress
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Over the past three years the college has made reasonable progress in improving success rates. Success rates in 2007/08 improved significantly and faster than the sector as a whole. Overall in 2007/08, long course success rates improved by 11 percentage points to 76%. This is three percentage points above the 2007/08 national average for similar colleges. The key area for improvement has been in adult provision. In 2007/08, success rates were eight percentage points above national average and over three years have improved by 13 percentage points. Success rates for students aged 16 to 18 in 2007/08 improved by six percentage points from the previous year and are now just below the national average at 74%.

Overall, retention rates are much improved and are now above the 2007/08 national average by four percentage points at 88%. The overall retention for 2008/09 is estimated to be 89%. However, for the same period, pass rates at 86% are one percentage point below the national average.

In the latest self-assessment report the College accurately identifies the key changes in success rates in 2007/08. For example, success rates for students aged 16 to 18 at level 2 and adult provision at levels 1 and 3 have significantly improved to at least above, and in some cases well above, the 2006/07 national averages. The report also identifies appropriately that success rates for students aged 16 to 18 at levels 1 and 3 and adult provision at level 2 remained static in 2007/08 and are generally in line with national averages.

In 2007/08, significant improvements in success rates have been made in health and social care, science and mathematics, information technology, arts and education and training subject sectors. However, in retail, leisure and languages, success rates have declined. Overall, key skill success rates have improved significantly since 2006/07 from 21% to 57% in 2007/08.

What improvements have been made to Train to Gain provision?	Insufficient progress
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The College has made insufficient progress to improve Train to Gain provision. Redbridge College acts as a managing agent for a local Train to Gain consortium funded by London East Learning and Skills Council (LSC). At the time of the monitoring visit the College was not delivering Train to Gain provision.

The College has invested significant resources to develop its approach to employer responsiveness and engagement. Part of this investment includes the development of Train to Gain. In 2006/07, the consortium enrolled 724 students onto Train to Gain and the overall success rate was 76% and timely success rates were 14%. Subsequently, success rates have declined. The latest College data for 2008/09, period 9, shows success rates at 51%, however, timely success rates are much improved at 67%.

College data clearly indicates that those consortium members without LSC contracts to deliver Train to Gain provision outside the consortium arrangement perform considerably better than those with contracts. For example, in 2007/08 consortium members without an LSC contract returned an overall success rate of 73% and the latest data for 2008/09 shows an improvement to 76%. College attempts to improve the success rates of consortium members with direct LSC contracts has had limited success. The College has appropriate compliance measures in place to monitor consortium members' performance. However, quality assurance arrangements are under-developed.

#### Quality of provision

What actions has the college taken to improve the quality of teaching and learning?	Significant Progress
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A new lesson observation scheme has been introduced this year. This now covers all teaching staff who are given two weeks notice of the three day period in which they will be observed. Observations are carried out by two trained observers, one of

whom is a subject specialist. Teachers are re-observed after support and development if their lessons were graded as a 3 or 4. Particular focus is given to teachers who are in their probationary period.

The recording of the outcomes of lesson observations is very thorough and is supported by an extremely useful database that enables managers to analyse across the college, for strengths and areas for development as well as by type and level of course. This helps to point teachers towards particularly effective practice through less formal developmental observations. A twice termly schedule of staff development is drawn up, some aspects of which are mandatory for all staff.

Managers report that observers now have higher expectations of what constitutes a good lesson. There is an increased and appropriate focus on learning and students' progress. The new observation system has given managers a more realistic picture of the quality of teaching and learning and while there has been a steady improvement in the proportion of good or better lessons, and a decline in the number of inadequate lessons, the college acknowledges that it still has a proportion of satisfactory teaching that needs to be improved.

Students speak highly of the support they receive in lessons. They feel that they are encouraged to do their best and that the lessons are challenging and largely enjoyable. They especially appreciate the support they get on improving their attendance and punctuality.

## Leadership and management

How much progress has been made in developing links with the community and employers? What has the impact of these developments been on students?	Significant progress
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The college has developed its links with the local and wider community very well. The "Aspiring Citizenship" project has enabled a high proportion of students to work with a wide range of charities and other organisations on projects related to fundraising and other important aspects of these organisations' work. For example, construction students designed and built a playground for children with learning disabilities. Music students perform for children in a local hospice and sports students work at a centre for children with multiple sclerosis.

Some of the sizeable English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) provision at the college is focused especially on "hard to reach" groups in the community and takes place on a number of community sites. Significant numbers of young students on ESOL courses work with the Epping Forest Trust on a high profile preservation project. Feedback from young people on this project shows that they gain great confidence from working in this way and the project clearly contributes greatly to their personal development.

Productive links with primary schools are developing well. Sports studies students provide coaching sessions in three local primary schools which provides them with

valuable coaching experience. Some students also act as teaching assistants in primary schools. A very successful "Chef's Academy" for children aged from nine upwards, parts of which are supervised by level 3 catering students in their own time, is sponsored by a national catering company, who have also donated significant amounts of state of the art equipment to the college.

Students enjoy this involvement with the community which helps to develop their sense of social responsibility and respect for others, both key values of the college. The college is very effective in encouraging many students to become involved with volunteering.

Links with employers are also developing well. The Employer Board has been effective in helping such links as the Young Apprenticeship scheme which operates in catering and hair and beauty. Apprenticeships are offered in a wide range of areas and the Careers Academy raises the aspirations of young people considering a career in business. Hairdressing staff provide bespoke training for a prestigious national hairdressing chain. Employers linked to the college have produced a DVD emphasising the importance of key skills in the workplace.

The college is carrying out assessments of employees' levels of literacy and numeracy on employers' premises and has recently begun to deliver some bespoke programmes for organisations.

How much progress has been made in developing provision for 14 – 16 year olds?	Reasonable progress
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The college provides very successful provision for young people who have been excluded or likely to be excluded from school. Progression rates for young people onto further related training or employment are high. Young people on the "Multi-vocational" course have access to a good range of qualifications and experience. Younger students who join the college's main vocational courses on an "infill" basis do well and make good progress. Some 15 young people are following a "transition" course which enables them to gain some vocational skills by attending college for one day each week and spending the rest of their time in school. The college also operates a successful Young Apprenticeship scheme and provides work experience opportunities for pupils taking GCSE catering in local schools. The college has provided hairdressing and beauty therapy salons in two local schools and college staff travel to the schools to teach these subjects. However, the number of young people participating in the standard school links courses has fallen in recent years. The progression rate of these young people onto vocationally related courses is low.