

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Redbridge College

August 1997

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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FUNDING COUNCIL**

The Further Education Funding Council has a legal duty to make sure further education in England is properly assessed. The FEFC's inspectorate inspects and reports on each college of further education every four years. The inspectorate also assesses and reports nationally on the curriculum and gives advice to the FEFC's quality assessment committee.

College inspections are carried out in accordance with the framework and guidelines described in Council Circular 93/28. They involve full-time inspectors and registered part-time inspectors who have knowledge and experience in the work they inspect. Inspection teams normally include at least one member who does not work in education and a member of staff from the college being inspected.

*Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry CV1 2WT
Telephone 01203 863000
Fax 01203 863100*

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GRADE DESCRIPTORS

The procedures for assessing quality are set out in the Council Circular 93/28. During their inspection, inspectors assess the strengths and weaknesses of each aspect of provision they inspect. Their assessments are set out in the reports. They also use a five-point grading scale to summarise the balance between strengths and weaknesses.

The descriptors for the grades are:

- grade 1 – provision which has many strengths and very few weaknesses*
- grade 2 – provision in which the strengths clearly outweigh the weaknesses*
- grade 3 – provision with a balance of strengths and weaknesses*
- grade 4 – provision in which the weaknesses clearly outweigh the strengths*
- grade 5 – provision which has many weaknesses and very few strengths.*

By June 1996, some 329 college inspections had been completed. The grade profiles for aspects of cross-college provision and programme areas for the 329 colleges are shown in the following table.

College grade profiles 1993-96

Activity	Inspection grades				
	1	2	3	4	5
Programme area	9%	59%	29%	3%	<1%
Cross-college provision	14%	50%	31%	5%	<1%
Overall	12%	54%	30%	4%	<1%

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 122/97

REDBRIDGE COLLEGE
GREATER LONDON REGION
Inspected September 1996-June 1997

Summary

Redbridge College offers a wide range of mainly vocational courses leading to nationally recognised qualifications. It has a variety of productive links with the local community. There are also effective links with universities which provide opportunities for many adult students on access courses to progress to higher education. Governors and managers are experienced and committed. Students receive good guidance and support. Some teaching is of a high standard and there are some good achievements by students in external examinations. Quality assurance procedures include staff appraisal and classroom observations. The standard of accommodation is generally good. To improve the quality of the provision the college should: increase the involvement of governors and staff in the strategic planning process; take steps to improve the quality of teaching in some areas; tackle poor attendance, retention and achievements in some areas; ensure that the quality assurance system is effectively implemented; establish an effective management overview of curriculum developments; improve communications at the day-to-day operational level; improve and extend the use of management information; ensure that more staff obtain assessor and verifier awards; monitor equal opportunities more effectively; update the industrial experience of some staff; and improve the availability of computers to students.

The grades awarded as a result of the inspection are given below.

Aspects of cross-college provision		Grade
Responsiveness and range of provision		2
Governance and management		3
Students' recruitment, guidance and support		2
Quality assurance		3
Resources:	staffing	3
	equipment/learning resources	3
	accommodation	2

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Science, mathematics and computing	3	Art and design	3
Business studies	3	Humanities/modern languages	2
Catering, leisure and tourism and sport	2	ESOL	2
Health and community care	2	Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	3
Hair and beauty	3		

INTRODUCTION

1 Redbridge College was inspected between April and June 1997 by 18 inspectors who spent 59 days in the college. Enrolment and induction procedures were inspected in September 1996 and an inspector attended a corporation meeting in May 1997. Inspectors observed 159 classes and examined a range of students' written and practical work. Meetings were held with students, governors, senior managers, representatives of London East Training and Enterprise Council (TEC), employers, teachers and support staff. Inspectors also examined documentation relating to the college and its courses.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 Redbridge College was opened in 1969, primarily to provide further education for the people of Redbridge and surrounding boroughs. The college works with a number of partners who teach students on its behalf at premises locally. At the time of the inspection, 6,490 students were enrolled at the college. Approximately 80 per cent of these were funded by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) and just over 75 per cent were over 19 years of age. Student numbers by age, by level of study, and by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

3 The college attracts students from a range of backgrounds and abilities. It offers learning opportunities in all but one of the FEFC's programme areas. It is a major provider of education for the deaf and other students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The college also provides non-examination courses for adults and young people through a variety of contracts with the London Borough of Redbridge and with local schools. It also offers a range of access to higher education courses.

4 Over 80 per cent of the local working population work in the City and the West End of London. A large and fast-growing minority ethnic population lives locally and the refugee and asylum-seeker population of Redbridge is the fourth largest in Greater London. Unemployment rates for residents from minority ethnic backgrounds are far higher than those for white residents, although there are pockets of very high unemployment which affect all groups.

5 Within Redbridge, manufacturing declined to 10 per cent of total employment between 1981 and 1991 whilst employment in banking, finance and insurance increased to 19 per cent in the same period. Over 80 per cent of employers are in the service sector and about 90 per cent of businesses have 25 or fewer employees.

6 The college's mission is to raise achievement and widen participation. Included in the mission is a specific commitment to support students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

7 Eighty-five per cent of the college's students are enrolled on vocational courses. There are three courses leading to general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) at foundation level, nine at intermediate level, and eight at advanced level. Courses leading to intermediate and advanced level GNVQs are available in science, the built environment, leisure and tourism, health and social care, art and design, and media studies. Foundation, intermediate and advanced GNVQ courses are offered in information technology, electronic engineering and business. A Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) national diploma is offered in fashion. Courses leading to national vocational qualifications (NVQs) are available at levels 1 and 2 in business administration, catering and hairdressing, at level 2 in care and childcare and in beauty therapy at levels 2 and 3. Additional vocational courses are offered through the RSA Examinations Board (RSA), the City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) and other awarding bodies. Students can study full time or part time. However, there are no open learning courses which allow students to study in their own time, using resources provided by the college.

8 The college offers 19 general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) subjects. These are taken mainly by part-time adult students or by younger students on vocational courses who want to retake particular GCSE courses. Due to a fall in demand, the college has reduced its provision of general certificate of education advanced supplementary/advanced level (GCE AS/A level) courses. Eleven GCE A level subjects and six GCE AS subjects will be offered in 1997-98. Many GCE A level students are adults taking courses in the evening. Full-time students can combine one GCE AS/A level subject with a GNVQ course. In 1996-97, 40 students took a combined vocational and academic programme of this kind.

9 A particular strength of the college's provision is its range of programmes designed to provide access to higher education for full-time and part-time students. These courses include an access to primary teaching course, as well as courses in combined studies, science, social studies and social work. Additional access courses in health and nursing, social care, and in art and design are to be offered in 1997-98. Close links with the University of East London and other universities in the region, have facilitated the progression of students into higher education. The college has made a substantial contribution to the work of the North and East London Accreditation Federation which validates access programmes and accredits Open College Network courses in the region. However, the college has missed opportunities to accredit some courses. For example, its 'new horizons' programme for students with severe learning difficulties is not accredited and there are limited opportunities for progression within the college for students who complete the course.

10 A substantial programme of sport, fitness and leisure activities caters both for those who require leisure facilities and for those who want to be

involved in competitive sport. Among the available sports are volleyball, cricket and football. Students have the opportunity to obtain a good range of coaching awards and qualifications in community sports leadership and football team management. Other activities include a music workshop, a drama club, religious studies, visits abroad, and various charitable fundraising initiatives. The college has established links with charities in Romania and India. Students and staff collaborate in raising funds and travel abroad to assist the work of the charities.

11 The college is responsive to the needs of deaf students and is a major centre for this work. Part-time British Sign Language courses are available which lead to recognised qualifications. The college is one of the few to offer the BTEC continuing education certificate in caring (communication support worker with deaf people). The college also offers a vocational access course for school-leavers with mild to moderate learning difficulties. Courses in physical education and other subjects are provided for two social education centres for adults. The college has collaborated with the University of London Institute of Education to produce a videotape on the teaching of deaf people.

12 The college offers a good range of courses in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) which meets the needs of minority ethnic groups, including refugees and asylum seekers who live locally. The courses in business English at foundation, intermediate, higher intermediate and advanced levels offer students good opportunities to progress to higher levels of study. All these courses include information technology as a means of improving students' qualifications for employment. To complement and extend its provision, the college has made franchise agreements with other providers to offer its ESOL courses in other parts of Redbridge and in other London boroughs.

13 Despite the local authority's withdrawal of discretionary funding for most students in 1996, the college has continued its long-established collaboration with the local education authority and the Redbridge Institute of Adult Education. The college offers a programme of non-vocational adult education courses funded by the borough, whilst the Institute offers some of the college's vocational courses under a franchised agreement. The college also provides vocational courses for pupils from two of the 11 to 18 schools in the borough as well a special programme, funded by the authority, for pupils excluded from local schools. The college collaborates closely with various local agencies concerned with the welfare of young people in running the programme.

14 The college is actively represented on local business organisations, such as the Redbridge Business Forum. In 1996-97, 190 employers provided a total of 465 work experience placements for the college's students. However, the college offers few full-cost courses to employers, and employers have little influence on curriculum planning. The college has established an effective partnership with the TEC. Activities which have resulted from the partnership include the regular participation of

college staff in a TEC programme which allows teachers to update their commercial or industrial experience. The college has also collaborated with the TEC, the local authority and private training providers in a successful bid for resources from the Further Education Development Fund to provide training for workers in the care sector, and for unemployed people who wish to work in the care sector. In 1996-97, the college participated in a successful bid for Single Regeneration Budget funding to tackle severe unemployment and the lack of people with appropriate skills and qualifications in a disadvantaged area of the borough. It also entered a partnership with the Peabody Trust, a charitable housing association, to bring educational opportunities to a new housing estate with a high rate of unemployment. In 1996-97, the college received some £260,000 from the European Social Fund. The funds which the college derived from sources other than the FEFC represented 20 per cent of its income in 1996-97.

15 Marketing and public relations are managed, respectively, by the principal and the director of resources and administration. Action has been taken in 1996-97 to improve the college's advertising and promotion of its services. The college recognises weaknesses in its procedures for developing full-cost provision for employers.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

16 There are 12 governors: seven independent members, a TEC nominee, two co-opted members, a staff member and the principal. Four governors are women and three are from minority ethnic backgrounds. There is no student member of the board, but student representatives meet formally with the chair of governors, two other governors and the principal before the full board meetings. A summary of this meeting is reported to the full board. Governors are aware of their responsibilities and understand the difference between their role and that of senior managers. The chair and members of the governing body have a good working relationship with the principal and other senior managers. Attendance at corporation meetings averages 75 per cent. There are five subcommittees of the governing body: planning and performance; resources; remuneration; audit; and the search committee, which oversees the recruitment of new governors. All committees have clear terms of reference and include appropriate membership from within and from outside the governing body.

17 The chair of the corporation has been in post since incorporation. During 1995-96, several governors completed their period of office. The search committee has recruited seven new governors who have already made a positive impact on the work of the college and have expertise in areas such as personnel, quality assurance, the law and marketing. The clerk to the governors delivers an effective induction programme to all new governors. Governors assess their training needs and, together with the clerk and senior managers, organise annual training days. Governors evaluate their performance as individuals and as a board. However, the

large number of relatively new governors has meant that some training needs are still to be met. A code of conduct for governors has been established and there is a register of governors' interests.

18 The governing body manages its business well. There is a clear timetable of meetings. The full board meets four times a year and most committees meet three times a year. Meetings are well prepared. The clerk to the corporation was a member of the college's senior management team until his retirement in 1996. Members of the corporation receive accurate, detailed minutes and carefully-prepared papers on agenda items. Subcommittees take reports and recommendations to the board. The restructuring of the college's management, and the need to address critical financial issues, have been priorities for governors over the last two years. Their involvement with the curriculum has been limited.

19 The college has a well-documented strategic planning process. Teachers and support staff are involved in the development of strategic plans within schools. School plans are developed according to a common framework and subsequently contribute to the college's overall strategic plan. The college's mission statement, strategic objectives and values are at the heart of the plan which covers marketing, curriculum, personnel, information systems and finance. The current plan does not include an accommodation strategy. In 1995-96, governors received training in strategic planning and the plan was discussed by governors as it developed. However, governors feel that they have been insufficiently involved in the planning process and are now monitoring its development more closely. In order to monitor its performance in relation to the strategic plan, the college has identified 'critical success factors' and a range of key performance indicators through which these can be measured. The process was introduced in 1996-97 and its effectiveness has yet to be established. Its success will depend much upon improvements in the college's management information.

20 Following management restructuring in 1995-96, the senior management team, which meets weekly, comprises the principal and the two directors who, together, lead the strategic development of the curriculum. The director of information systems and finance is the line manager for two directors of studies who in turn manage the seven heads of school and the technician support staff. The director of resources and administration has management responsibility for the four senior tutors and all student support services. The principal chairs a development group which focuses on the strategic development of the curriculum. In addition to the principal, the group includes the business development manager, the staff-development manager and the quality assurance manager. This new group had a slow start and has yet to establish its effectiveness. Senior tutors are responsible for student disciplinary procedures, the co-ordination of student induction and pastoral support. They clearly understand their role. Heads of school manage course team

leaders and teachers. Course team ethos is generally strong and most courses are managed effectively.

21 Lines of communication are generally clear. Timetabled weekly meetings provide opportunities for course team leaders to exchange information with heads of schools. Senior managers provide regular staff briefings for middle managers and the information from these briefings is then communicated to all other staff. Despite these meetings, regular newsletters and full staff briefings from the principal, some staff and middle managers believe that communication systems need further development to ensure that day-to-day operational issues are dealt with effectively and efficiently.

22 The academic board, chaired by the principal, has an appropriate membership drawn from across the college. It meets five times a year and advises senior managers and governors on academic matters. The governing body identifies key issues relating to academic developments for the year and these form the basis of the academic board's annual programme. This ensures that key personnel have to prepare reports for the board. Members receive papers well in advance of meetings to ensure that there is adequate time for all relevant views to be expressed.

23 Organisational changes have meant that some middle managers now have a cross-college management role in addition to a substantial teaching timetable. In many cases, they are unable to manage all aspects of their work effectively. Weaknesses are evident in some aspects of staff appraisal, quality assurance and curriculum planning. The college intends to remedy this by modifying the roles of some middle managers.

24 The college has policies for health and safety, equal opportunities and many aspects of cross-college and curricular activities. Management responsibility for each is clear. Policies are reviewed by the appropriate committees and reports are considered by the senior management team and, where appropriate, governors. The college has been unable to monitor efficiently the operation of its equal opportunities policy in the absence of accurate data.

25 At the start of the 1996-97 academic year, the college had a significant financial deficit. It has acted rapidly to address this issue and confidently predicts that the deficit will be eradicated by the end of the year. Since the appointment of the director of information systems and finance in January 1996, the quality of financial reporting has improved considerably. Each month, the college accountant provides clear and accurate budget variance reports to senior managers and all budget holders. The college monitors key performance indicators as a means of informing its financial planning. The delegation of staffing and non-staffing budgets to heads of schools is calculated against the targets which they set for their units of activities. Staff development has been used to ensure that teachers are aware of the financial position of the college and that the costs associated with the provision of courses are clearly understood. Curriculum area costs are

closely monitored and widely reported. The college's income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1996 are shown in figures 5 and 6. The college's average level of funding for 1996-97 is £18.76 per unit compared with £19.05 per unit in 1995-96. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges is £17.97 per unit.

26 The absence of reliable management information has been a significant weakness which has affected many areas of the college's work. Prior to 1996-97, the college had no coherent management information system. Financial data were inadequate and a substantial amount of funding was not claimed as a result of inaccurate data. The college has recognised the need to establish an effective computerised system. There is now a clear allocation of responsibility for data collection, analysis and reporting. However, the computerised system has not had time to produce a full cycle of information and, at present, some managers are running parallel paper-based systems to provide information on students' attendance, retention, achievements and destinations. They do not yet have direct access to the system. Although there is evidence of improvement, there are still some conflicts between data held within schools and those held centrally.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

27 There are clear strategies and effective procedures for the recruitment and enrolment of students. The new college prospectus provides essential information for prospective students and there are individual information leaflets on all courses. Because the college has limited contact with local schools, the prospectus together with an individually addressed letter is sent by direct mail to all local year 11 pupils. Information is also sent to the local careers offices and libraries, and distributed at careers fairs, conventions and the Jobscene exhibition in the Docklands, where the college has an information stall. Publicity is aimed at particular groups in a variety of ways: leisure courses are advertised in local sports magazines; and courses for those with impaired hearing are displayed in an appropriate specialist magazine. As part of its revised promotion strategy, the college has identified a need to publicise its courses more widely, particularly some vocational courses and uses open days for this purpose.

28 The college's guidance unit plays an effective role in providing information and giving impartial advice to prospective students. It is open five days a week throughout the year. The prospectus includes an enquiry form on which students can request an interview and further guidance. Enquiries are dealt with sensitively. People seeking guidance are able to speak to a member of the unit and, where necessary, arrange a time to meet subject or course specialists. The college runs a useful summer advisory service from mid-July until the end of August. All applicants for full-time courses are interviewed; those interested in part-time study can be interviewed if they wish. The interviewing process and the pre-induction information ensure that students have a clear understanding of the content and requirements of the courses they choose.

29 The student services manager is responsible for admissions and enrolment. Applicants can be enrolled at the summer advisory service. Enrolment procedures for full-time students are flexible, carefully planned and sensitive to the needs of students. Part-time students can enrol by post, by telephone, at the summer advisory service or at normal enrolment sessions at the start of the term. Staff are provided with useful information sheets to guide them during enrolment. Students spoke positively about the help they received at enrolment. However, procedures to assess students' prior experience and learning are not well developed.

30 There is a comprehensive induction programme for full-time students. Under the direction of the four senior tutors it provides students with a welcome to the college, information on the college's services, an introduction to their courses, and an opportunity to identify their basic skills development needs. Part-time students have a session where they receive a briefing document on the work expected of them, as well as information on college services. Course team leaders introduce other activities within the induction programme, such as a fair where students can select additional courses. During induction, students receive a well-designed handbook and pocket diary which includes the college charter, the college's policy on equal opportunities and further information on the services available in the college and locally.

31 All full-time students are screened in order to assess their literacy and numeracy skills. The process is effectively organised. Results in 1996 indicated that, in addition to ESOL students, there were 373 students who needed additional support in numeracy and 167 who needed support in literacy. All these students were interviewed and, where necessary, support was offered. There are English and mathematics workshops providing timetabled sessions. 'Drop-in' support sessions are provided each day in both workshops. The accommodation used for literacy support work has been newly furnished and is well stocked with appropriate materials. Provision for the numeracy unit is limited by a lack of computer software. There are clear procedures for monitoring the screening process, negotiating work plans and reviewing students' progress. The college is aware of the limitations of the Basic Skills Agency tests and plans to introduce more comprehensive screening.

32 Other support for students is also well organised. Deaf students are assisted by trained communicators whose support is professional, thorough and well planned. Specialist support enables the students to undertake mainstream academic courses. Adult students on English as a foreign language courses spoke positively about the individual attention and support they receive on their courses and the opportunity they are given to work at their own pace. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported. Students on the access courses spoke enthusiastically about the quality of the guidance and support given by teachers and tutors, as well as the support students give to each other.

33 There is generally effective tutorial support for full-time students and for those part-time students following substantial courses. Students have a personal tutor responsible for their support and guidance, the supervision of records of achievement and action plans for learning. There is a regular timetabled tutorial session once a week where students can meet their tutor individually or as a member of a small group. A common college tutorial programme helps to ensure that students receive similar information, group guidance and opportunities to explore issues. However, the approach used depends upon individual tutors and the effectiveness of tutorials varies across the college. Absenteeism was a significant feature of tutorials observed during the inspection. Senior tutors are responsible for monitoring the support given to students; they hold regular meetings with personal tutors and arrange training sessions for the tutors, as required. They monitor the support given to students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, oversee the guidance unit and have a teaching commitment. This combined workload has a detrimental effect on the quality of planning and the implementation of some tutorials.

34 Good careers advice and information is provided within the guidance unit by a full-time administrator assisted by a team of specialist teachers from each school. A careers adviser from a careers company attends the college two days a week and there is additional support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The unit has a wide range of books, leaflets, videos and computer software which is extensively used by students. From the beginning of September to mid July 1995-96, the unit conducted almost 800 interviews and handled over 4,000 enquiries. Students spoke positively about the careers advice they receive and are confident about seeking information from the unit.

35 A welfare manager provides a widely-used, effective counselling and welfare service. She also co-ordinates the communicators required by deaf students and oversees the first aid provision. In 1995-96, there were 2,333 enquiries recorded by the service, 42 per cent of which were related to finance. So far this year, the proportion of enquiries about financial matters has risen to over 60 per cent. The welfare manager works closely with senior tutors in organising an annual health week programme. This year, topics included first aid, stress and nutrition. Over 100 students attended. The college has a small creche providing places for 12 children aged two to five. The students' union is an active group which meets regularly with the senior management team.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

36 During the inspection, inspectors observed 159 teaching sessions. In 46 per cent of the sessions inspected, strengths outweighed weaknesses. This figure is well below the national average of 63 per cent for colleges inspected in 1995-96, according to figures published in the *Chief Inspector's Annual Report 1995-96*. Eight per cent of lessons had

weaknesses which outweighed the strengths. The average attendance at the sessions inspected was 75 per cent. The following table shows the grades awarded for the lessons inspected.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade 1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level	1	4	7	0	0	12
GCSE	0	7	4	1	0	12
GNVQ	2	15	18	6	0	41
NVQ	0	9	15	0	0	24
Other*	9	26	30	5	0	70
Total	12	61	74	12	0	159

**other includes basic education, access to higher education, BTEC national diploma, C&G, RSA and ESOL courses.*

37 Individual lessons are well planned, but schemes of work vary in quality. Most teachers pace the work in lessons sensibly, teach at a level appropriate for the course and the differing abilities of students, and use a variety of teaching methods. In the majority of lessons, there are supportive working relationships between students and teachers. In the better sessions, the teaching is lively and imaginative. Teaching is of a high standard across the range of access to higher education courses; students benefit from teachers' effective teamwork. Access course staff have adopted a challenging approach; they work to up-to-date syllabuses, and have high expectations of students. Practical sessions on vocational courses such as those in science, catering and art and design are often well structured. However, in a significant number of lessons, the teaching fails to interest students and teachers do not always ensure that all are involved in learning activities. In some lessons teachers fail to reinforce what students have learned in previous sessions. Usually, students' work is carefully set and marked and teachers provide useful oral and written comments designed to enable students to improve their work.

38 Teaching in science and computing is of better quality than in mathematics. Some good experimental investigations were observed in science subjects. For example, in an effective GCE A level biology lesson, students were asked to formulate a hypothesis on the effect of heat on vitamin C. They were required to design an experiment to test the hypothesis, to carry the test out accurately and finally, as a group, to interpret the results obtained. In the better computing and mathematics lessons, students are involved in an appropriate range of activities and make progress in the tasks set. However, in many mathematics and computing lessons there is a lack of variety in the teaching methods used and a failure to make good use of learning support materials. In mathematics, for example, there was no evidence of information

technology or graphics calculators. Work was not regularly set and marked on some mathematics courses. On some science courses too little attention was paid to the development of students' key skills.

39 Business teachers prepare their sessions thoroughly and cover the material in sufficient detail to meet the requirements of the syllabuses. Some teaching is good. Generally, however, teaching on business studies courses while sound lacks sparkle. Often, the work is insufficiently related to the real world of business. Teaching and learning on office technology and administration programmes are well structured. Students are able to develop a good range of skills in a modern office environment. In a very successful intermediate GNVQ business environment lesson on pollution, topical material was introduced by the teacher in an exciting and stimulating manner. The students responded with enthusiasm and the level of discussion was high. Teachers often relied too much on lectures and failed to provide sufficient opportunities for students to learn on their own. Opportunities to develop a deeper level of analysis of business problems, which would stretch the more able students, are rarely exploited. In most lessons, checks on students' learning are inadequate. Students are generally willing and co-operative in the classroom.

40 Though many catering students come to the college with low levels of achievement, teachers encourage and support students and plan practical work so effectively that examination results are good. Practical work in cookery is well managed. An assessment plan is formulated before each lesson. However, because the training restaurant is small, students are unable to practise fully their skills or to have them assessed. In long sessions, some teaching is not sufficiently stimulating, and a few students lack the ability to work without supervision. Catering students with learning difficulties are strongly motivated. Students' portfolios at all levels are well organised. The teaching of theory is good, action planning is well conducted and assessment schedules for students are exemplary. The standards to be achieved on NVQ courses are well understood by students and staff. Staff are careful to ensure that students carefully record evidence of the competences they have acquired.

41 Sports and leisure courses are well organised and taught by teachers who work well as a team. Information technology plays a significant part in the teaching of the courses and practical work is a regular feature. Theoretical concepts are taught in a leisure and tourism context and teachers take care to extend students' general knowledge in areas such as geography and alternative cultures. Practical work is closely monitored. The pace of work, often set by the students, is occasionally too relaxed.

42 The aims and objectives of health and social care courses are clear and usually shared with the students. The marking of students' work is very good on childcare courses and sound on GNVQ programmes. Schemes of work are clear and kept up to date. The level of challenge in the work provided for students varies. Teaching sessions on some courses are too

long. The energy of both staff and students tends to flag towards the end. Teachers' support for individual students is good. They are effective at providing work which takes account of students' differing abilities. The quality of handouts used by teachers is variable, and often unsatisfactory.

43 Many hair and beauty therapy lessons contain some elements of sound teaching, although in half of the sessions inspected the work lacked structure and rigour. Teachers sometimes failed to share key learning objectives with students. In some lessons, the work lacked commercial realism and, in the main, question-and-answer sessions proved ineffective in extending students' learning. Teachers make regular checks on students' progress in practical lessons; a system for monitoring and recording students' achievements in practical lessons is actively implemented throughout the school of hairdressing and beauty. Teachers give insufficient attention to the development of students' key skills. In particular, there is little opportunity for students to develop information technology skills.

44 In art and design, the standard of teaching varied but it was mainly sound. Staff are particularly sensitive to the varying needs of the students. Where teaching was most successful there were good working relationships between staff and students, and students received appropriate support from teachers. In the fashion lessons inspected there was a good balance of activities. The work was challenging and students maintained their interest. Students often achieve work of a high standard. Teachers carry out assessment and grading rigorously and fairly. The written feedback to students on some assessments, however, is not sufficiently detailed to enable students to improve their work. On advanced GNVQ courses, the poor quality of course planning results in students being unable to relate the different aspects of their work. On these courses, the standards set in the second year are not high enough.

45 Humanities teaching is good. It is particularly strong on access courses and the BTEC continuing education certificate in caring where the teaching is suitably rigorous and demanding. The access to humanities programmes require students to read and research widely and to take a series of challenging written examinations. The quality of teaching is also high on British Sign Language and counselling courses. In a psychology lesson on a counselling course, students listened attentively to a lively and lucid exposition of a test which indicates types of personality. The students completed the test themselves and discussed the results in small groups. Teaching on GCE A level and GCSE humanities courses is generally good. Students are attentive, responsive, and willing to contribute to discussion. Good working relationships between teachers and students help to create a positive learning environment. Schemes of work for GCE A level and GCSE humanities courses, however, vary widely in quality and some need further development. In a minority of lessons, teachers' expectations were too low; the work set was relatively undemanding, and teachers tended to

do too much for the students. In general, foreign language teaching was good. Teachers paid appropriate attention to the development of students' speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. In all but one of the lessons observed, the language being learned was the principal medium of communication.

46 On ESOL courses, the quality of teaching and learning is generally good. Students benefit from well-balanced teaching which aims to extend their understanding of the language as well as to improve their ability to use it. Teachers are usually successful in devising a content and a context for lessons which motivate students. A few lessons, however, lack intellectual challenge. Catering for the different abilities of students is sometimes difficult as students range from graduates to those who are illiterate in their own language. In the best lessons, tutors emphasise the everyday use of aspects of the English language. In one successful lesson, students discussed the recent general election and drafted a letter to the prime minister. The teacher supplied some useful background information on the British parliamentary system. Students responded well and achieved a good standard of written English.

47 Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are taught by enthusiastic teachers who are committed to the education of their students. Schemes of work are detailed and lessons are carefully planned. There was some effective teaching of skills and concepts and students were given opportunities to learn on their own and gain greater autonomy. In one lesson, the teacher took care to explain the objectives of the work and the activity in clear, simple terms. She taught the students how to construct a spider diagram and how to use it to make a plan. All the students were involved in the exercise and able to make appropriate comments about what they were doing. In some sessions the teacher did not allow students to work on their own, experiment or learn from their mistakes and failures. In other lessons, the teachers' presentation of information was too confusing for students with learning difficulties. Teachers frequently failed to use students' own experiences and the realities of their lives as a basis for learning. Classroom support assistants were often not sufficiently skilled in promoting individual and small group learning.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

48 Reliable data on retention and qualification rates were not always easily available at the time of the inspection. However, it is clear that the percentage of students completing their courses, and the regularity with which they attend, vary considerably across the college and within programme areas. Students on access courses in sciences and humanities, and on the BTEC continuing education certificate in caring course, attend lessons regularly and usually complete their courses. Completion rates are also good on the community sports leaders award and the various coaching award courses, vocational courses in sciences, and some GCE A level courses. Completion rates on health and social care, and art and

design courses are more variable. Attendance and completion rates are a cause for concern on leisure and tourism courses, some catering courses and a range of courses in mathematics and computing. Students' poor punctuality was noted by many inspectors; some students were over 20 minutes late for their lessons.

49 Results on access courses and the BTEC continuing education certificate in caring course are good. Generally, over 90 per cent of students on access courses in humanities and sciences complete their courses successfully. Their files demonstrate the substantial progress they make during their courses. All the communicators who support deaf students were trained in the college on the BTEC continuing education certificate in caring course. Eighty-three per cent of students completed this course successfully in 1996.

50 In 1996, 68 per cent of the 134 students, aged 16 to 18, on their final year of study on intermediate vocational courses were successful according to the information in the tables published by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE). This places the college among the middle third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure. Seventy-six per cent of the 109 students in their final year of study on advanced vocational courses included in the DfEE's 1996 performance tables were successful. This also places the college in the middle third of colleges in the sector on this performance measure. Students who complete vocational courses in computing and information technology generally do well, and pass rates are mainly above the national average. The standards achieved by students on advanced GNVQ science courses are comparable to those achieved by GCE A level students in terms of practical skills, but their intellectual understanding of scientific concepts and their use of statistics are less developed. The pass rates on advanced GNVQ business courses are just below the national averages. However, only half of the students entered in the past two years on the advanced level leisure and tourism programmes passed their examinations.

51 Pass rates for students on GNVQ intermediate courses also vary. Some students are producing work of a high quality. For example, following a visit to a sixth-century church, intermediate GNVQ media students were producing a 15-minute video. They were working well as a team of four and understood their roles and responsibilities. Their photography was of a good standard and demonstrated a self-critical approach. Students completing NVQ catering courses at level 2 achieved a pass rate of 82 per cent, well above the national figure. Pass rates on most one-year beauty programmes were close to national figures though results on two-year hairdressing and beauty courses were poor. Results in science were below the national average. Although students on intermediate GNVQ business programmes develop skills in using a wide range of industrial standard information technology software packages, the pass rate, at 44 per cent, was well below the national figure. Pass rates on

recently introduced courses in care and childcare at NVQ level 2 have been good.

52 Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities on NVQ level 1 programmes in food preparation and service achieved high standards of competence and a good degree of confidence. Pass rates on the foundation GNVQ business course were fractionally below the national average and pass rates on NVQ levels 1 and 2 administration in terms of full awards were poor in 1996.

53 Many students were successful on other vocational courses. Students on the Association of Accounting Technicians courses achieved good levels of progression from level 2 to level 3. Pass rates at foundation and intermediate levels were in line with national averages and, occasionally, above. Most students who completed the community sports leaders award and the various sports coaching awards were successful. However, the results on the International Association of Bookkeepers bookkeeping courses at foundation and intermediate level showed a significant downturn. Most students on ESOL courses achieved good standards. The majority progress to a higher level course in English or to another course in the college. Many adults achieved success on vocational courses. Some individual successes were outstanding. Two evening class students won the C&G silver medal for their work on their GNVQ advanced business course. In two successive years, an individual student has won a national award from C&G, and a scholarship from a national organisation for work on the intermediate level leisure and tourism course.

54 The college has only a small number of students studying GCE AS/A level subjects. Fifty-four students aged 16 to 18 taking at least one GCE AS/A level subject in 1996 scored, on average, 2.2 points per entry (where grade A=10 points, E=2), according to the data published in the 1996 performance tables published by the DfEE. This places the college in the bottom 10 per cent of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure. In GCE A level English and psychology the pass rate for students aged 16 to 18 was significantly below the national figure, as was the proportion gaining grade C or above. Pass rates in sociology, film studies, biology and chemistry are usually above national figures. Pass rates in psychology for students aged 19 and over are also usually above national figures. Results are more mixed in chemistry. Pass rates are poor in physics, mathematics and computing and on the one-year evening course in French. In sociology, results for students aged 19 and over are also below national figures.

55 Pass rates at grade C or above are good in some GCSE subjects, particularly those offered on a part-time basis. Modern language results improved in June 1996, those in German and Spanish being above the national figures for grade C or above. Pass rates on media and English courses for students aged 16 to 18 were also above national figures. Some students on the vocational access certificate course, who had little or no

previous examination success, gained good GCSE passes in single subjects. However, pass rates at grade C or above in other subjects are poor. In mathematics, pass rates at grade C or above over the last three years have varied between 21 per cent and 31 per cent, significantly below the national average. Pass rates on GCSE English courses are below national figures for students aged 19 and over and pass rates on GCSE photography courses are poor.

56 The college collects information on students' destinations. In 1996, 15 per cent of students completing vocational courses progressed to higher education, 13 per cent continued in further education, and 28 per cent entered employment. Fourteen per cent progressed to other destinations and the destinations of the remaining 30 per cent were not known. Each year, most students on access courses and some on advanced GNVQ courses go on to higher education. In 1996, 85 per cent of advanced GNVQ business students entered higher education. Many students on childcare courses progress to employment. Progression from intermediate to advanced courses is good. Ten of the 16 intermediate GNVQ students progressed to the advanced GNVQ programme.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

57 Quality assurance procedures are based on the college's mission to raise achievement and widen participation. A quality assurance manager has overall responsibility for establishing policy and procedures, and for monitoring their implementation. He reports directly to the principal. There is a clear and comprehensive manual for staff on the policies and procedures associated with quality assurance. This is supplemented by a curriculum team leaders' handbook detailing the elements required to manage quality assurance at that level. It provides specific guidance on the process of course review and on maintaining course files. Responsibility for implementing the system rests with heads of schools who report annually to the academic board on the outcomes of reviews. The academic board includes members of the college's quality panel. The quality panel, chaired by the quality assurance manager, comprises both directors of study and the director of information systems and finance. Its function is limited to monitoring the quality assurance procedures. It does not consider their effectiveness.

58 Course reviews are conducted by teams of staff working to the specifications in the quality manual and handbook. Reviews occur during the first term to evaluate the induction phase, halfway through the course to evaluate perceptions of teaching, learning and support, and at the end of the course to evaluate final outcomes and students' achievements. The cycle is repeated on two-year courses. Extensive use is made of surveys of students' perception of their courses. These are produced to a common format and administered through the tutorial system. Students speak positively about the sections of the surveys which give them the opportunity to explain their views on aspects of their courses. However, they had little

confidence in those sections which require them merely to tick boxes against statements which they consider to be too general or which they feel they do not understand fully. For example, when asked to evaluate teaching they are not given any specific guidance on what constitutes effective teaching. Students sometimes receive good feedback from course tutors on the outcomes of surveys, and of specific actions taken to deal with issues raised. Often, however, there is no feedback and no indication of any response.

59 Reviews by course teams and schools use a range of performance indicators covering students' retention, attendance and achievements. Because the college's management information system is often unable to provide accurate and timely information, some staff use information compiled within course teams. This information is not always accurate. External verifier reports are also used by course teams to inform their annual review, and internal verifiers contribute through their observation of teaching and learning. The majority of course teams produce detailed, evaluative reports with appropriate action plans. A few lack rigour in their analysis of the information gained from surveys. In these cases, resulting action plans are vague and provide little indication of how performance is to be measured or targets achieved. Reports are circulated to heads of schools and senior managers who use them for their own reviews and for planning. Overall, course reviews have failed to address the variable quality of teaching and learning.

60 There are well-documented procedures for course approval and revalidation by school boards of studies under the guidance of the directors of studies. Course approval is in two stages. Initial documentation has to include information on costings and resource needs, and must relate the proposal to school and college strategic aims. If approved, a second submission is required to produce evidence that the course can be effectively taught. The college has a system of revalidating each of its courses after four years. However, there is no evidence of it being implemented.

61 There is an annual appraisal system for all full-time staff which has recently been extended to include part-time staff who have substantial contracts. The scheme, which has been operating for five years, is based on appraisal by line managers. The appraisal interview starts with an evaluation of previously-set targets and, where appropriate, a report on classroom observation forms part of the agenda. Development needs are identified and personal targets and action plans agreed. These are reviewed at the end of each summer term by the college staff-development manager and personnel manager who together manage and monitor the system. The process requires each head of school to interview between 15 and 20 teachers. Most staff value appraisal as a supportive process. However, a few teachers consider their appraisal ineffective because their line managers had insufficient time to carry it out fully.

62 The college has a clear policy and programme for staff development. A budget of £30,000 was allocated for 1996-97, but this figure does not include staff costs nor the wide range of staff development organised by the college itself. Recent internal provision includes an extensive range of training in information technology skills. Staff evaluate all training, and reports are used to the benefit of other staff. Applications to attend external courses and events have to be approved by line managers, the staff-development manager and the personnel manager. Applications are assessed according to whether they are in line with personal targets agreed at appraisal and the college's strategic aims. Training is also provided on college development days when all staff consider major college initiatives, such as the development of a self-assessment report. Evaluations of staff-development activities indicate that staff welcome and value them. However, a recent staff survey shows that a significant number of staff consider that the development needs identified at appraisal are not being met.

63 There is an induction programme for all new staff. The programme includes meetings with relevant managers, and briefing papers on a range of college policies, including health and safety. New members of staff have a probationary period, usually lasting six months, during which performance is monitored by the appropriate line manager. Staff speak positively of the way they are supported during induction and their probationary period.

64 The college does not have established performance standards for all of its support services. The college's reception and welfare services staff have recently agreed basic standards in responding to telephone calls and in recording and dealing with enquiries. Responsibility for the further development of service standards and monitoring rests with service managers. Service teams have an understanding of quality standards and support their introduction.

65 The college charter states clearly the range of commitments the college makes to provide a good service to students. The college also lists in a single sheet format entitlements to teaching of good quality, additional learning support, tutorials, and careers and welfare advice. It does not, however, give measurable indications of what these entail. The complaints procedure does not tell students clearly enough to whom complaints should be made.

66 The college's self-assessment report was drawn up in 1996-97 through a consultative process using lead authors to work with teams of staff on the separate sections. The report addresses each of the inspection framework headings identified in Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. It provides a useful overview under each heading. The report identifies some of the weaknesses revealed through inspection but it does not give sufficient emphasis to others. Some new systems and developments, as yet unproven, are listed as strengths.

RESOURCES

Staffing

67 The college employs 80 full-time and fractional full-time teachers and 15 full-time equivalent part-time teachers. Just over 50 per cent of all teachers are women. There are a further 22 full-time equivalent staff who support direct learning and 41 other support staff. Most of these are full time. Ninety-four per cent of staff identify themselves as white.

68 Teaching staff are adequately qualified. Just over 66 per cent of the full-time teachers have first degrees, a significant number have higher degrees and 92 per cent of all teachers have teaching qualifications. Communicators working with the deaf are well qualified. Teachers are generally experienced in their subject areas. Staff teaching health and social care have good qualifications and experience but some of this is more suited to care than health. There is a shortage of expertise to support the science element of GNVQ courses. The balance of staff expertise on the advanced GNVQ course in art and design does not allow for the development of students' basic skills in visual studies. Some of the staff working with students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are underused.

69 The level of commercial, industrial, and professional experience amongst teachers varies. In a number of areas, such as catering, and hair and beauty, effective use is made of part-time staff to bring up-to-date experience to the classroom and there are practising artists and designers amongst the art staff. The staff teaching travel and tourism have relevant vocational experience. However, teachers on business and science courses have had limited opportunities to update their industrial or commercial experience, and the college finds it difficult to recruit part-time staff to support some courses. Progress towards the achievement of assessor and verifier qualifications varies and is slow in some areas. Good progress has been made in catering and hair and beauty therapy. Progress has been slow in art and design, health and social care, and leisure and tourism. No science staff have yet achieved assessor or verifier qualifications.

70 Staff responsible for central support functions such as premises, finance, information technology, the refectory, the resource centre and human resources are generally well qualified and have relevant experience. Good-quality technical support for specialist areas is provided by a small team. However, owing to the limited number of technicians and a lack of adequate administrative staff, support is variable in its effectiveness in art and design, and catering. There are appropriate personnel policies and procedures in operation, and the deployment of staff is effectively monitored.

Equipment/learning resources

71 Most general classrooms are adequately equipped, and television and video equipment is available on a booking system. The standard of

specialist equipment varies but is generally satisfactory. Rooms used for media and art and design have a wide range of basic equipment. The fashion facility is well equipped. The woodskills workshop provides an appropriate range of equipment but the metalwork facility is contained within the engineering section and is not accessible to art and design students. There is a poor range of equipment for silver-based photography courses despite the large number of students. There is a modern, well-equipped office for NVQ administration programmes. Students studying health and social care have access to a wide range of equipment. All other curriculum areas have an appropriate range of equipment.

72 The resource centre includes a library, study areas, and two open access information technology workshops. There are 120 study spaces. Use of the centre is monitored; at peak times it becomes overcrowded. The library contains about 35,000 books and a good range of compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) databases, cassettes, newspapers and periodicals. The budget for 1996-97, excluding staffing costs, totals £27,000, of which £24,000 is for books. This represents an increase of about 11 per cent since 1995-96. There is effective liaison between the resource centre staff and teaching staff. Learning resources are good in a number of curriculum areas including media and art, tourism and sport, and most areas of health care, but they are inadequate in catering, languages, physics and chemistry. There is a general shortage of learning materials to support students working in the information technology workshops.

73 The college is committed to the further development of its computer facilities. A recent successful bid to the competitiveness fund will provide funds to improve the network, and increase access to the Internet. The college's main facilities are provided in the two open access information technology workshops. In total, there are 151 computers available for students' use, a ratio of students to computers of 13:1. The number of computers available to students on a dedicated open access basis is low; over 75 per cent of the available time in the flexible workshops is taken up by timetabled classes. Access to information technology across the curriculum is poor in some areas. There are few computers in science laboratories, and none in the catering and hairdressing areas. There is a shortage of computer software to support mathematics and numeracy and some part-time business administration students are still using electronic typewriters. There is limited access to computers to support design as a basic learning tool.

Accommodation

74 The college operates from a single site and the mainly single-storey buildings provide easy access for wheelchair users. Since incorporation, there has been little major building work. Improvements include a second information technology workshop, a new hairdressing salon, a new media studio, and changes to the accommodation for art and design. The college's planned maintenance budget for the current year is £117,000.

75 The standard of general teaching accommodation varies from good to poor. Some successful attempts have been made to provide base rooms for courses. Many of the rooms used for humanities and social science, business, catering, health and social care, and courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are pleasant and well decorated. Some are small and there is too little use of students' work for display. Some of the rooms used for leisure courses and mathematics are inappropriate; in science and the built environment, some lectures take place in laboratories.

76 The standard of specialist accommodation varies. Most is good but some is poor. The accommodation for art, design and media programmes is spacious, light, and airy. The television and video editing suites are fit for their purpose but the photographic darkroom is too small. Kitchens used by catering students are adequate. The training restaurant is well decorated and carpeted. One of the hairdressing salons compares favourably with the highest industrial standards but other accommodation used in the hairdressing and beauty area is not of the same quality. There is an adequate number of science laboratories, but some are too small for a number of the classes which use them. Some laboratories are in need of refurbishment. A purpose-built block including a sports hall, viewing gallery and weights room provides good accommodation for sport.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

77 Redbridge College is making good progress towards achieving its mission. Its strengths are:

- a wide range of courses leading to national qualifications
- good standards of teaching in some subject areas
- good achievements by students on some courses
- effective procedures for students' recruitment, guidance and support
- the professional support given to deaf students
- its effectiveness in working with pupils excluded from schools
- the effective partnerships with the local community, the TEC, the local authority and higher education institutions
- governors who have a clear understanding of their roles and a commitment to the college
- a productive relationship between governors and senior managers
- the high standard of some teaching accommodation.

78 If the college is to build on these strengths, it should:

- increase the involvement of governors and staff in the strategic planning process
- improve the quality of teaching in some areas

-
- tackle poor attendance, retention and achievement in some areas
 - ensure that the quality assurance system is effectively implemented
 - establish an effective management overview of curriculum developments
 - improve day-to-day communications across the college
 - ensure that the management information system provides accurate and timely data and is more widely used
 - ensure that more staff obtain assessor and verifier awards
 - monitor equal opportunities more effectively
 - update the industrial experience of some staff
 - improve the availability of computers to students.

FIGURES

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- 1 Percentage student numbers by age (as at July 1997)

 - 2 Percentage student numbers by level of study (as at July 1997)

 - 3 Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at July 1997)

 - 4 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at May 1997)

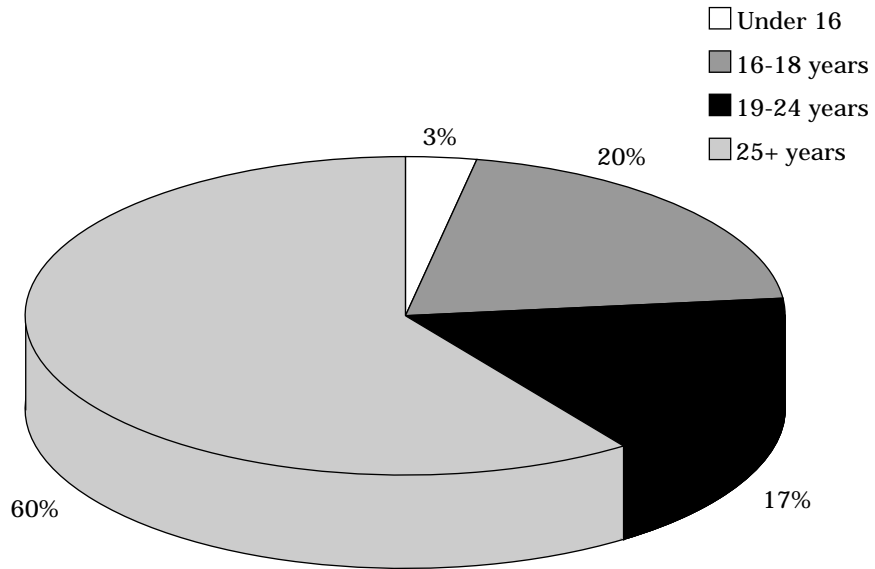
 - 5 Income (for 12 months to July 1996)

 - 6 Expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)

Note: the information contained in the figures was provided by the college to the inspection team.

Figure 1

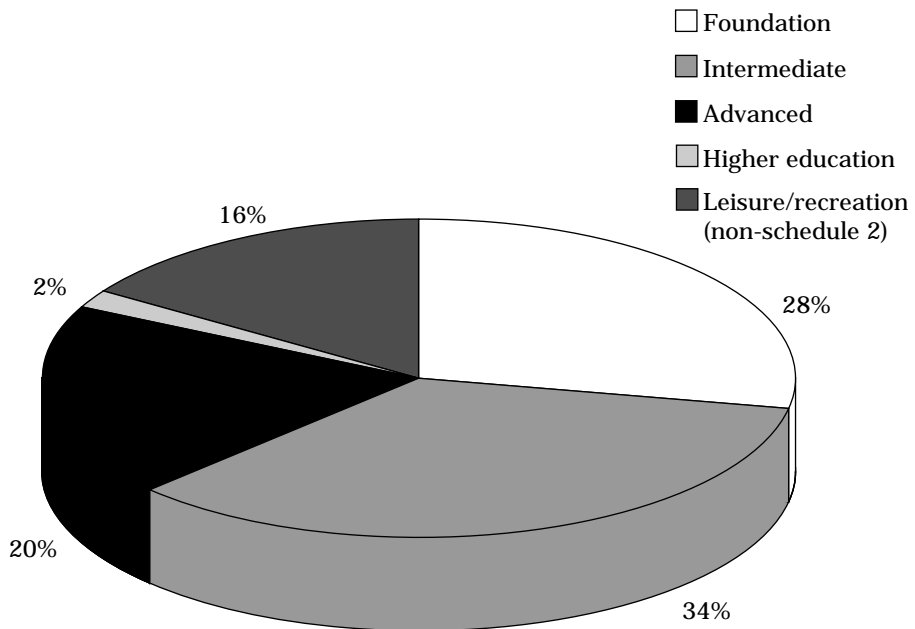
Redbridge College: percentage student numbers by age (as at July 1997)



Student numbers: 6,490

Figure 2

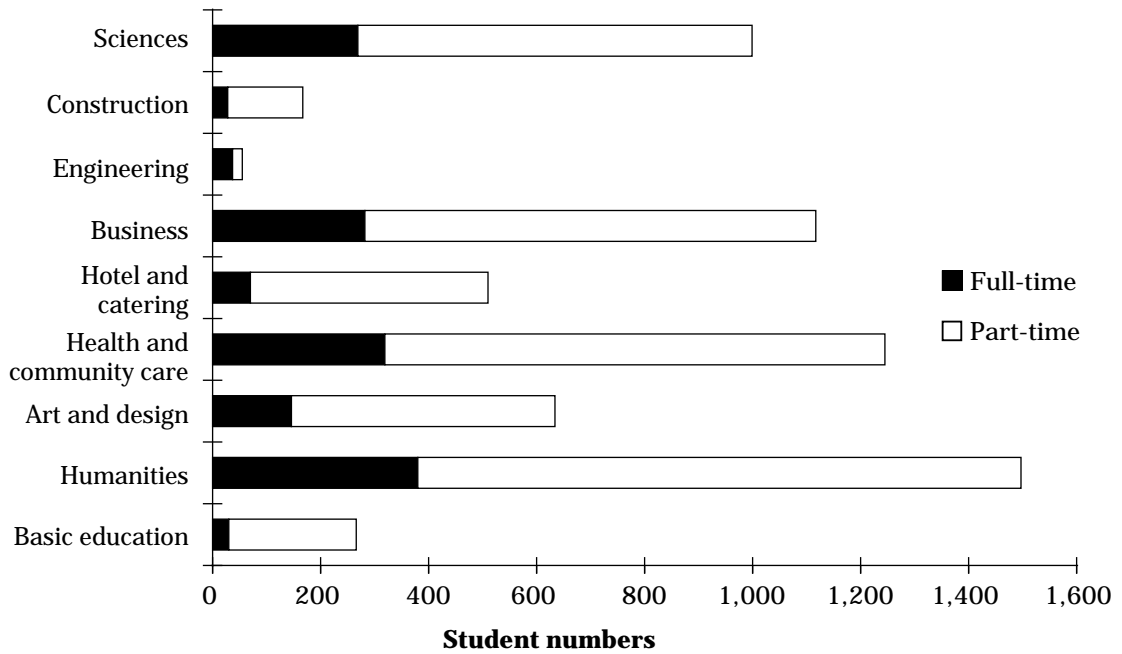
Redbridge College: percentage student numbers by level of study (as at July 1997)



Student numbers: 6,490

Figure 3

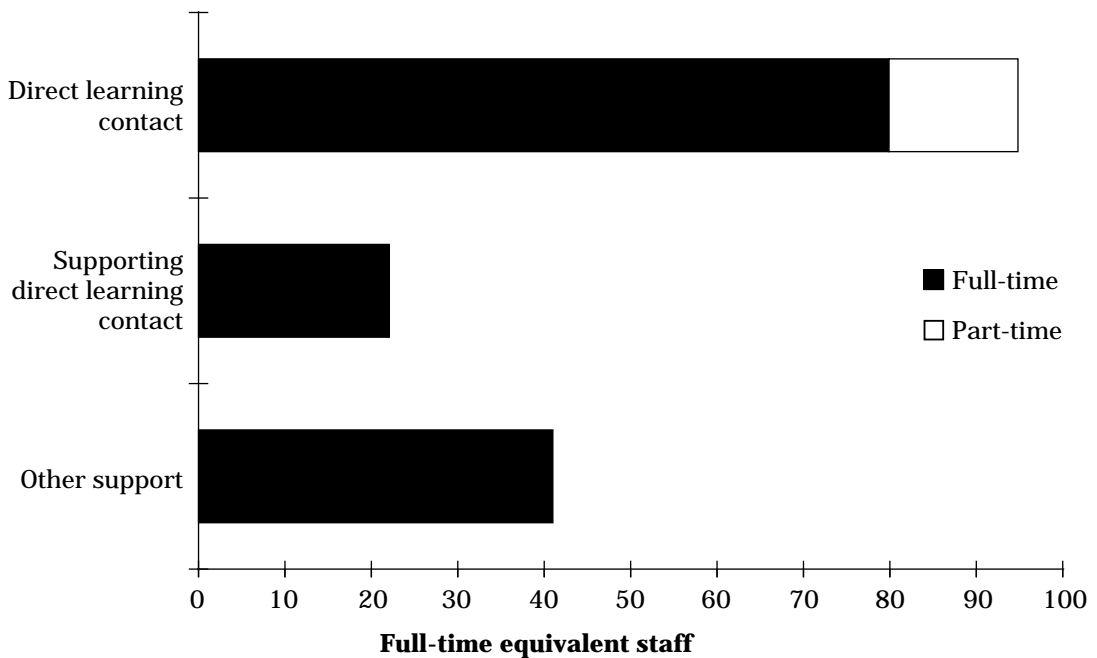
Redbridge College: student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at July 1997)



Student numbers: 6,490

Figure 4

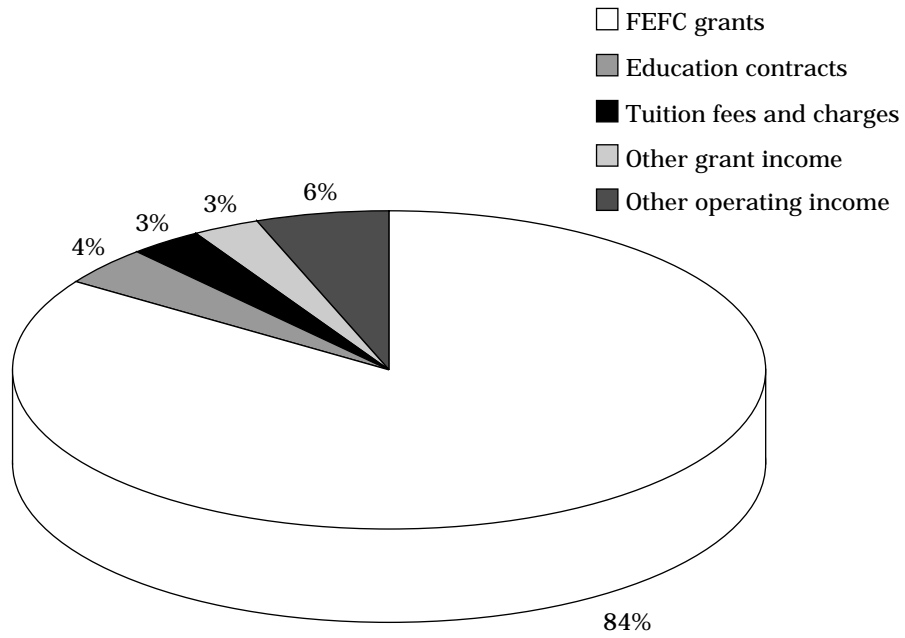
Redbridge College: staff profile - staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at May 1997)



Full-time equivalent staff: 158

Figure 5

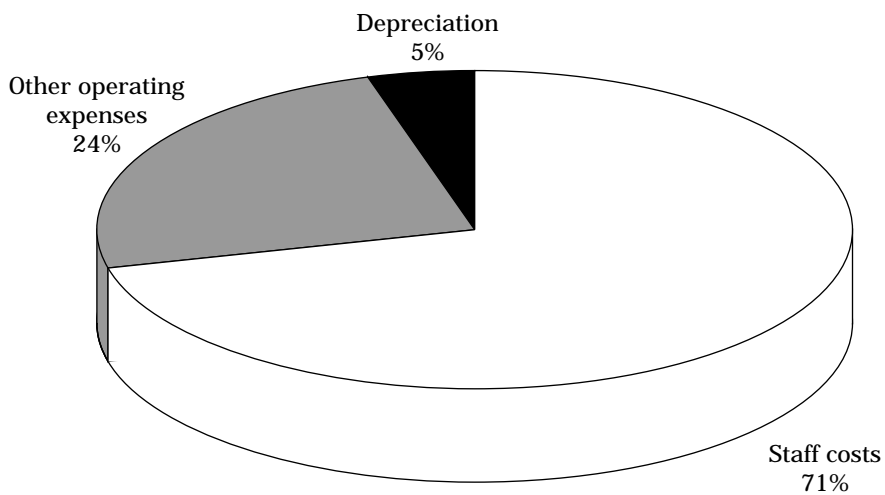
Redbridge College: income (for 12 months to July 1996)



Income: £6,272,000

Figure 6

Redbridge College: expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)



Expenditure: £6,875,000

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