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IN EDUCATION**

**INSPECTION OF  
LEEDS  
LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY**

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## **APPENDIX: RECOMMENDATIONS**

## INTRODUCTION

1. This inspection was carried out by OFSTED in conjunction with the Audit Commission under Section 38 of the Education Act 1997. The inspection used the *Framework for the Inspection of Local Education Authorities* which focuses on the effectiveness of local education authority (LEA) work to support school improvement.

2. The inspection was partly based on data, some of which was provided by the LEA, on school inspection information and audit reports, on documentation and discussions with LEA Members, staff in the Education Department and in other council departments and representatives of the LEA's partners. In addition, a questionnaire seeking views on aspects of the LEA's work was circulated to 100 schools. The response rate was 76 per cent.

3. The inspection also involved studies of the effectiveness of particular aspects of the LEA's work through visits to fifteen primary, nine secondary, and two special schools. The visits tested the views of governors, headteachers and other staff on the key aspects of the LEA's strategy. The visits also considered whether the support which is provided by the LEA contributes, where appropriate, to the discharge of the LEA's statutory duties, is effective in contributing to improvements in the school, and provides value for money. The inspection also took account of relevant evidence from HMIs' national monitoring work.

## COMMENTARY

4. Leeds is one of the UK's largest cities. In many ways a microcosm of national diversity, it has areas of considerable prosperity and others which experience great economic disadvantage. It has significant numbers of pupils from a wide range of minority ethnic groups, very many of whom live in the areas of disadvantage. In recent years many Leeds residents have enjoyed the benefits of the great revival of business in the city centre, but the City Council is rightly concerned that this good fortune is not extending to the whole population.

5. The city's schools were reorganised at the beginning of the 1990s. Unfortunately, this left many schools with too many places, particularly as the city experienced some population movement away from the inner areas. It also established a number of very small sixth forms. Some schools have therefore been struggling with budgetary problems and have had difficulty in making good educational provision. There is also a drift away from schools in the inner areas at secondary transfer, and a similar drift from the outer areas to schools outside the authority.

6. Overall, standards in the city's primary schools are slightly above the national average and improving at the national rate. Inspection evidence shows that the proportion of good primary schools is greater than that nationally. Secondary schools, overall, do not do well. Their GCSE results are below the national figures and are improving slower than the national rate, and the proportion of schools requiring improvement is above the national average. Certain minority ethnic groups perform below the city average in both primary and secondary schools.

7. Judgements made by the inspection team rated the LEA's provision as unsatisfactory or poor in two-thirds of aspects where judgements were made. This weakness of provision extends almost consistently across all of its core responsibilities and because of this, overall, it gives very poor support to school improvement. Its weaknesses, particularly with regard to secondary schools, far outweigh its strengths, both in number and significance.

8. The LEA provides a good or very good service in the following areas, mainly deriving from strength amongst certain middle managers:

- the provision of performance data and guidance in its use;
- financial advice;
- partnership work and professional guidance in early years provision.

There are also aspects of strength in: its strategies for information and communication technology and for behaviour support; its emerging strategy for the development of numeracy; corporate links between the Education Department and the Social Services Department; some of the work of Families of Schools, especially that which involves other agencies. Some aspects of work with external partners have strengths. The LEA has had some success in bidding for external grants.

9. The LEA, however, exercises the following functions unsatisfactorily or poorly:
- the construction of a coherent Education Development Plan;
  - the provision of nursery, primary and secondary school places;
  - the provision of viable sixth forms;
  - strategy for the provision for special educational needs;
  - support for target-setting by schools;
  - monitoring of schools;
  - support for schools causing concern or likely to do so;
  - support for schools' self-review;
  - strategy for support for minority ethnic pupils;
  - educational psychology support;
  - education welfare support;
  - buildings services.

In addition, its support for literacy got off to a poor start, although it has since improved somewhat.

10. There are a large number of underlying weaknesses in the work of the Education Department which affect a range of functions. Consultation with schools over certain key issues has been weak, as has been the communication of policies. The targeting of resources has been opaque and imprecise. The LEA's knowledge of its schools' needs is sometimes poor. Links between different projects have been weak. Departmental planning is of variable quality. Internal performance management has been weak, and the Department is not well prepared for the government's Best Value regime. There are still traces of paternalism in some aspects of the authority, although, ironically, this has not always led to effective intervention when things have gone wrong in schools. Perhaps most importantly of all, the LEA has not led schools to a clear understanding of the new relationship which government seeks to promote between local authorities and schools. The LEA has done too little to steer away from a culture where schools were dependent on it, to one in which it supports their efforts to improve themselves.

11. The reason for the manifold weaknesses is clear: they derive from poor leadership in the past. Elected Members have been heavily involved in the management of education in Leeds for many years, and, for instance, local Councillors are still able to influence the provision of additional funds to schools in their wards. This gives rise to confusion about where accountability and authority lie. The Council allowed the Education Department to run without a permanent Director for four years. The first attempts to appoint a new Director were abortive partly because some potential candidates were put off by what the District Auditor and a recruitment consultant described as perceptions of political interference. The lack of permanent professional direction during this crucial period (1995-1998) meant that important strategic decisions (for instance, about secondary school places) were not taken, and that Leeds could not move on quickly with the new central government's agenda and its new role.

12. The LEA has now had a new permanent Director for one year, and he has very recently been joined by two new senior managers. The Director has laid out a clear vision for the future and has encouraged a fresh approach. Some significant new and

improved procedures have been initiated. Unfortunately, this has come very late. Tangible improvements have not yet happened, and the LEA is still far behind where it should be. Overall, the LEA gives unsatisfactory value for money. These severe judgements, however, should come as no surprise to Leeds schools. In a survey undertaken for this inspection schools' judgements on the LEA's work rated it significantly lower than the average for all LEAs being inspected this term in 73 out of 96 indicators.

13. Many of the weaknesses noted in this report have already been recognised by elected Members, senior and middle managers and developments are taking place. Good political leadership will be particularly necessary in future, and the authority needs to act urgently on the recommendations in this report. Nevertheless, given the sheer volume, depth and range of the authority's failings, this inspection team has limited confidence in the LEA's capacity to respond fully to the government's agenda within an acceptable timescale. In addition, an LEA has to ensure that it is exercising its functions with a view to promoting high standards in its schools. Although it is accepted that Leeds intends to discharge that obligation, it is not, at present, doing so successfully, given the cumulative weaknesses set out in this report. Finally, it will be necessary for OFSTED to appraise the LEA's progress in meeting the recommendations in this report in the near future.

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

### **Context**

14. Leeds LEA serves a large geographical area including urban, rural and semi-rural areas. Its population of 727,000 is the second largest of all metropolitan districts in England, and is very diverse in terms of income, wealth, unemployment, ethnicity and other socio-economic factors. Statistics for the whole area mask wide variations within certain sectors of the population. Although levels of employment overall are improving, they are disproportionately high in the inner city area (12 per cent) and amongst certain minority ethnic groups.

15. The LEA currently provides 18 infant schools (15 with nursery classes), 14 junior schools, 211 junior and infant schools (133 with nursery classes), 43 secondary of which 39 have sixth forms, 11 special schools and 4 pupil referral units. Less than half of the city's 39 sixth forms have 150 or more students. Eleven have fewer than 100 students and six have fewer than 50 students.

16. 12.9 per cent of primary pupils and 11.6% of secondary pupils are from minority ethnic groups. 90 per cent of ethnic minority pupils of secondary age attend just 6 of the 43 high schools. Indian, Pakistani and Black Caribbean are the major ethnic groups represented within the school population.

17. A decline in the birth rate and migration from inner city to the outer areas of Leeds have resulted in increasing surplus places within the primary sector and within some secondary schools. Overall, 7 secondary and 46 primary schools have more than 25 per cent surplus places. 76 per cent of children under 5 are on the roll of a mainstream school, although a significant proportion of nursery classes have more than 50 per cent empty places.

18. In 1998-99, 25 per cent of pupils in primary schools and 20 per cent of those in secondary schools were entitled to free school meals. Both are above the national average and have increased in recent years. Eligibility for free school meals varies widely between schools ranging from 0.7 per cent to 68 per cent in primary schools and from 4.3 per cent to 79.4 per cent in secondary schools.

19. The percentage of pupils with Statements of Special Educational Need educated in secondary and special schools is close to the national average but the proportion educated in primary schools is above average.

### **Performance**

20.

- At the end of Key Stage 1, the percentages of pupils achieving Level 2 and above in each of the English tests and mathematics are in line with the national average. At the end of Key Stage 2, standards in English, mathematics and science are slightly above the national average. The rates of improvement in English and mathematics since 1996 are broadly in line with the national rates. The performance of girls and boys is similar to the national picture.

- Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 in English, mathematics and science is slightly below the national average and statistical neighbours.
- GCSE results are lower than the national average. The average GCSE point score has increased but is still below the national level. The proportion of pupils gaining at least one grade G or better remains well below the national average or that of similar authorities. The number of pupils not entered for any GCSEs is approximately 4 per cent higher than the national average. Although the percentage of 5 or more A\*-C grades has improved slightly in recent years, the overall rate of improvement is slower than the national rate.
- The total A-level points score for students taking two or more A-levels has been rising for the past six years, and is slightly above the national average.
- The LEA's own analysis of achievement by ethnic groups at Key Stage 2 and at GCSE indicates that there are marked differences between the performance of different groups. In English and mathematics at Key Stage 2, Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Black Other groups achieve below the LEA average. At GCSE, Black Caribbean, Black Other, Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups have relatively low average GCSE point scores compared with the average for all pupils. Analysis by gender shows that girls achieve higher scores than boys in every ethnic group at GCSE. There are some indications that the lower performance of some of these groups may be associated with local economic disadvantage.
- Attendance in primary schools is broadly in line with the national average but below average in secondary schools. The rate of unauthorised absence is in line with the national average for primary schools but is above average in secondary schools. The LEA has been successful in recent years in reducing the rate of permanent exclusions and in 1998 it was broadly in line with the national average. There has been a further significant reduction in permanent exclusions since then.
- OFSTED inspection evidence shows that the proportion of good or very good primary schools in Leeds is higher than in the country as a whole and compared with statistical neighbours. The proportion requiring substantial improvement is about the same. The proportion of good or very good secondary schools is lower than is seen nationally. The proportion of secondary schools requiring substantial improvement is higher than the figure nationally, with around half performing below or well below like schools. Of the remainder, only a very small number are performing better than similar schools.
- At present there are five schools requiring special measures, 3 primary and 2 secondary. There are seven schools classified by OFSTED as having serious weaknesses: 4 primary, 2 secondary and 1 special school. These are lower proportions than are seen nationally. There are a further 21 schools identified by the LEA as a cause for concern: 17 primary, and 4 secondary schools. This amounts to an overall figure of 11 per cent of schools within the LEA.

## **Funding**

21. The City Council's expenditure on Education has been consistently above its SSA. However, the gap between expenditure and the SSA is closing: it has reduced

annually from 6.6 per cent in 1997/98 to 3.6 per cent in 1999/2000. Priority has been given to protecting school budgets.

22. Leeds delegated 85.2 per cent of the Local Schools' Budget (LSB) to schools in 1999/2000, which is above the national average and the government's requirement of 80 per cent for 2000/2001. The LEA aims to achieve the 5 per cent target for increased delegation through a range of measures which include greater delegation of central support services and of elements of the Standards Fund. It is also on course to delegate funding for a wide range of central support services for April 2000. Leeds central administration costs are £44 per pupil, well within the Secretary of State's target of £65.

23. Funding per pupil for both the primary and secondary school sectors was about the national average in 1998/9. Although funding per pupil for 16 year olds was £26 lower than the national average, the figures for 17 and 18 year olds were £155 and £222 higher. Whilst Leeds' Individual Schools' Budget (ISB) per pupil in 1999/2000 is the tenth highest among metropolitan authorities, its centrally held expenditure on a per pupil basis is low. These two factors cancel each other out to some extent and the overall spending on schools in the LSB ( £2504) is similar to the average for Metropolitan authorities (£2586).

24. The LEA has low central expenditure per pupil in 1999/2000 in most aspects of spending on special educational needs and in the provision of education otherwise than at school, compared to other metropolitan authorities.

25. The LEA does however incur higher than average expenditure per pupil in a few areas of its central spending including home to school transport and the Education Welfare Service. Its central spending on non-Standards Fund specific grants is the highest out of 22 metropolitan authorities.

26. Capital expenditure is planned to be £16.1 million in 1999/2000, and is also high compared to other similar authorities.

### **Council Structure**

27. The City Council changed to an Executive Board and scrutiny system in May 1999 in line with central government's proposals for modernising local government. The City Council meets five times a year, and its role in education is to make major strategic decisions, such as setting the Education Department budget. There is no longer an Education Committee. The Executive Board, comprising nine Members, meets approximately monthly and, being the main decision making body of the Council, has responsibility for major education plans and expenditure. It is a fundamental principle of the Council's operation that decisions are made by officers where possible and other decisions are therefore delegated to the Director of Education.

28. The Council is in the process of establishing 16 Community Involvement Teams: groupings of local Councillors and community representatives, supported by officers, with responsibility for planning local provision in line with the Corporate Plan, and using delegated budgets to run local projects. It is not at all clear at this stage how the work

of these teams can be organised so that their work is well aligned both with the policies of the Education Department and with the development plans of locally managed schools. This appears to be a recipe for confusion.

29. The Scrutiny Board responsible for educational matters has a huge brief including many other important areas, such as economic development and planning, and has only just begun to consider the scope of its task in reviewing education. Whether, in view of its manifold responsibilities, it will have the capacity to undertake serious reviews of education must be questionable. This is a crucial matter, especially given the lack of a forum for sustained and public debate about educational issues in the other parts of the council structure.

30. An Executive Board member holds a portfolio for Lifelong Learning and Leisure. He has responsibility for reviewing provision and developing new policy in Education and related areas. Three Lead Members work to him. Lead Members are expected by the Council to undertake specific briefs on a task-based, time-limited basis. However, these briefs have not yet been defined, and the Lead Member (Raising Achievement) is frequently in contact with officers and schools, developing and reviewing policy, without as yet a clear remit. The Executive Member, Lead Members, and Director of Education meet fortnightly with other Chief Officers in this portfolio area, to discuss progress on the Council's policies. Overall, this structure is potentially workable, and, crucially, allows for transparent delegation to the Director, but the lack of clear remits for the Lead Members gives opportunity for confusion.

31. Under both the previous and the new Council structure, schools have been, and are, able to gain additional funding through the influence of their ward Councillor. There are two schemes in operation. About one quarter of schools benefited from the first scheme last year, being granted sums ranging from less than £100 to several thousand pounds, mainly for equipment or minor improvements. The other scheme, of ward based initiative grants, generally provides higher levels of grant, and one school gained £45,000 last year for improvements to facilities, while others gained nothing. The chief finance officer is authorised to provide funding in each ward in consultation with the local Councillors. In practice, this officer seeks to meet the ward Councillors' wishes. The same sum is available to each ward; some Councillors might cause this to be spent on schools, whereas others might cause it to be spent on other services. While schools are pleased to have access to these additional sources of funding, the schemes build an element of incoherence into the funding of the educational system. The schemes are governed by overall Council priorities, and larger grants require approval by the Education Department, but there is no means of ensuring that the funds are allocated according to the greatest need. The schemes therefore undermine the principles of formula funding and equitable capital funding in education.

### **The Education Development Plan**

32. Leeds' Education Development Plan (EDP) is poor. Although for the most part based on an audit of local performance data, it does not make systematic analysis of attainment by ethnicity. The School Improvement Programme does not make coherent use of the audit of schools' performance. The proposed activities are

insufficiently focused or prioritised and success criteria are too often vague and lacking in rigour.

33. The plan's priorities, however, do reflect national and local issues. They are:

- improvement in schools causing concern
- improvement in literacy
- improvement in numeracy
- use of information and communications technology for improved learning, teaching and management
- improvement in standards and progress at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4
- improvement in attendance, behaviour and punctuality
- improvement in quality of teaching
- improvement in school management and leadership.

34. The target setting process is set out clearly within the EDP. The LEA has identified the proposed action to be taken if a particular school's targets are judged to be too low. Figures for the 1999 Key Stage 2 tests show that the gap between the LEA's overall target and aggregated schools' targets for English and mathematics at Key Stage 2 has already begun to narrow. The LEA's targets for GCSE were increased in response to the consultation on the EDP, where respondents felt that the original GCSE targets lacked sufficient challenge. However, it is not clear from the EDP how the proposed activities will lead to the considerable improvement projected in the GCSE results. The current plan of action is unlikely to cause schools to achieve their targets.

35. Key performance indicators for monitoring and evaluating each priority and/or activity have been identified, but they are often not quantifiable and lack specificity. The plan does not spell out how the LEA will evaluate the effectiveness of its actions. In particular, the strategy for involving schools and other key partners in the evaluation of the plan is not clear.

36. Evidence from school visits indicates that schools and governing bodies were not well consulted during the development of the EDP, and there is minimal alignment between EDP priorities and school development plans. The LEA wisely intends to establish a Joint Development Planning process at a major conference in Spring 2000 which will begin to address this issue, and will attempt to make service planning and development planning coherent across the city.

37. Work on EDP activities has been in progress for only eight months, too short a time to allow a confident judgement about its overall implementation.

### **The Allocation of Resources to Priorities**

38. The LEA has started to improve the targeting of its resources to meet its stated priorities, but it has some way to go before the funding of its services and plans are fully aligned. One significant change is a re-distribution of £264,000 to enhance the Raising Achievement division and a further £159,000 to strengthen its strategic planning as part of a much needed reorganisation of the Education Department. These were necessary and appropriate resource shifts in areas where

expenditure has been significantly lower than the Metropolitan average. However, more adjustments are needed.

39. The distribution of funding allocated to the EDP does not correspond well to its needs audit and corresponding targets across priority areas. For example, the funding allocated to the EDP priority on improving school management and leadership is almost four times that allocated for the priority on improving attainment at Key Stages 3 and 4. The LEA is aware of this and is reviewing the targeting of its resources as part of an overhaul of the plan.

40. The Council is making good progress overall with its Best Value pilot and with its preparations for Best Value from April 2000. However, this is not true of the Education Department. While it has links to the Council's work on Best Value, it does not yet have clear plans and its preparations are not well advanced. For instance, its report on an early Best Value review of the Education Welfare Service although comprehensive, would have gained from more rigour, challenge, consultation, and inclusion of comparative cost data. School visits during this inspection showed that school managers are not clear about the implications of Best Value.

41. The recent introduction of a more robust planning framework including medium term financial planning will give the Council a sound platform to improve the targeting of resources to priorities, as well as making judgements about relative priorities on a strategic basis. The Council's work on Best Value is also beginning to address the lack of involvement of stakeholders in a debate about spending priorities.

42. Many of the Council's educational priorities relate to its overriding aim of regenerating the poorer parts of the city. It has a long established policy of channelling additional resources to these areas, mainly through the use of external grants targeting Community Priority Areas and, through the school budget formula. In the past the targeting mechanisms have been rather blunt as some schools serving disadvantaged localities have been omitted from certain grant bids because they are not located in the main target areas. The Council is now considering a more sophisticated approach.

## **Recommendations**

43. **In order to improve the strategy for school improvement,**

the Council should:

- ensure that the roles and executive authority levels of the Lead Members for Lifelong Learning and Leisure are defined in line with Council policy;
- review the role of Scrutiny Board 3 in order to judge whether it can realistically combine scrutiny of education with its other tasks;
- ensure that the Community Involvement Teams mesh appropriately with the work of the Education Department and the development of individual schools

- review the schemes which allow local Councillors to influence the provision of additional grants to individual schools, in order to ensure that funding meets priority needs.

the Education Department should:

- ensure that the proposed Joint Development Planning process fully involves schools in discussing the priorities of the EDP and the implications for their own development planning;
- revise the EDP to ensure that there is greater coherence in the programme of activities, that activities are more clearly defined, and that appropriate success criteria are specified for each activity;
- review its resource planning in order to reflect the needs of each function as detailed in the EDP.

## **SECTION 2: SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT**

### **Implications of other functions**

44. The recent re-structuring of the Education Department is intended to put school improvement at the forefront of the work of each of the Divisions: Raising Achievement, Social Inclusion, Resources and School Support, and Strategic Planning and Partnership. All divisions are involved in some way in implementing EDP activities, but the Raising Achievement Division (RAD) and the Social Inclusion Division are those most specifically involved in school improvement activities. The RAD includes standards officers whose main task is to monitor and challenge schools, and school effectiveness officers who supply advice. Weaknesses in the EDP will make performance management of the Divisions against EDP success criteria difficult.

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

45. The new Director of Education has set out a clear vision for Leeds schools. The LEA now intends to provide a challenge to the city's schools, and also offer them support in their efforts to improve. This vision, welcomed greatly by schools, has the potential to be a mobilising force in Leeds schools as it is put into effect, but, inevitably, it has not yet had time to be a tangible influence. It is, nonetheless, intended to make the authority a more responsive, rigorous and vigilant body than it is at present.

46. The LEA is well aware of the need to focus some of its school improvement work more sharply in areas where educational attainment is currently weak. There is some good practice to be built on, especially in early years developments. The authority is developing the concept of local achievement zones in which a range of services will work more co-operatively to enhance educational opportunities. This thinking, which draws on experience from Families of Schools (discussed later in this report), is now being usefully incorporated into the authority's plans for its work as part of the government's Excellence in Cities initiative.

47. The two main strategies for monitoring the performance of schools are the analysis of performance data, and an annual Shared Review. In addition, notes of visit are written following visits or other contacts which include a significant discussion with the school by both standards and effectiveness officers. The first cycle of reviews was seen partly as a training exercise for both schools and officers. Limited self-evaluation took place in schools in preparation for the review, and, in many cases, there was no attempt to probe behind the numerical targets to challenge thinking about their implications for work in the school. To date, the Shared Review has been a stocktaking exercise of limited value to the LEA and even less to the schools. The Shared Review process has now been refined in preparation for the second cycle. The intention is to make the process more stringent and challenging and to relate it more closely to schools' own self-evaluation - features not always present in the earlier reviews.

48. Visits to schools confirmed that improvements in the review process are necessary. Only a third of primary schools surveyed considered that the LEA has a

good knowledge and understanding of the school. Less than half the secondary schools think that the monitoring was useful and only one in ten rated it more highly than this. This is a considerably more critical view than found in other LEAs. During the school visits of this inspection few headteachers could point to action in school resulting from the review, and some expressed doubts about its value in providing reliable monitoring or evaluation for the LEA. One school with serious weaknesses, after a bland Shared Review report, was subsequently found by OFSTED to require special measures.

49. Understanding in schools of the LEA's intentions for monitoring and support is variable, and often far from clear. Consultation and information about the new RAD structure has had limited effect, and in some of the schools visited the distinction between the roles of Standards Officer and Teacher Adviser is still confused.

50. Schools receiving additional support generally need it, although not all are receiving the level of support they need. The LEA's previous track record in identifying these schools early enough and taking appropriate action was poor. Generally, it is now more secure in identifying schools with problems associated with standards of attainment than in pinpointing those where there are management and personnel difficulties. In some cases, problems have been exacerbated by the LEA's policy decisions.

51. Resources for school improvement have not always been targeted to areas of greatest need. Some of this is the result of inconsistency in the practice of individual officers, not all of whom have made the necessary readjustments in their role in relation to schools. School support is not always well judged, and there are examples of either too much direct help being provided, leading to a culture of dependency, or too little, resulting in a school being left without the means or the ability to tackle a problem. The recent establishment of a School Improvement Strategy Group, however, is a sound step forward.

52. The staffing structure of RAD needs further review, as its secondary expertise is understaffed. At present this Division is likely to have difficulty in meeting the demands of the EDP priority on Key Stages 3 and 4. RAD is not a costly service but it does not yet provide satisfactory value for money because of weaknesses in the Shared Review system, its mismatch of expertise, and its weak targeting of needs.

### **Collection and Analysis of Data and Guidance on Target Setting**

53. The collection and analysis of school performance data are well managed and are a strength in the work of the LEA. This is reflected very favourably in the responses to the schools survey. Guidance on the use of data in target setting, however, has weaknesses.

54. The range and the depth of data analyses undertaken by the Pupil Achievement Unit (PAU), a branch of RAD, are good. They enable comparisons to be made of groups of pupils within schools, as well as between schools and groups of schools within the LEA and with national benchmarks. Analysis of the performance of large samples of pupils in Leeds schools over time provides the basis for useful value added data, which forms a significant part of the LEA's target

setting strategy. Schools value the data provided, and the support available to help them to interpret and use them. A school may also request more detailed information in order to compare itself with other known schools in the LEA and to identify those where it might be possible to learn through sharing best practice. This aspect of the service provides good value for money.

55. The PAU has set out in considerable detail a process to guide schools in setting targets, and provides training for headteachers and governors. The PAU calculates a predicted range for the school, using the same data, and the school's target is compared with this. However, the targets resulting from this kind of extrapolation remain at best a sophisticated forecast, rather than a challenge to the school to modify its working patterns in order to improve standards. Only rarely was there discussion with a school that challenged it to consider how its practices could be changed in order to achieve the target. While some schools have seen that setting challenging targets has inescapable implications for practice, most of those visited have not made this connection. In some instances, where the school's target fell below that determined by the PAU, the school was asked to provide an explanation, which in most cases was accepted without further comment. Advice given in such cases was more related to ways of raising the target than of modifying practice in order to achieve it.

### **Support for Literacy**

56. The LEA has set a target that, by 2002, 83 per cent of pupils will attain level 4 or better in English at the end of Key Stage 2. Given that 65.8 per cent of pupils attained this level in 1998, it is an ambitious target. Having said that, pupils who will reach the end of Key Stage 2 in 2002 achieved significantly better results than their predecessors at the end of Key Stage 1.

57. The central plank of literacy support in the LEA is the National Literacy Strategy (NLS). Almost all the schools visited where support for literacy was a theme were critical of the quality of initial training which was provided in launching the NLS. Some literacy co-ordinators said that they were not suitably prepared for the cascade training they were expected to provide for colleagues. The strategy lacked a specialist input relevant to the needs of special schools. After this less than promising start, sound progress has been made in the first group of 28 schools receiving intensive support. Levels of support have been well-judged and the additional training has been integrated into their own development planning. Standards in English in these schools have risen over the year, as they have in the majority of schools in the authority. Other schools have access to all training courses, some of which have been well received, receive news sheets and other publications, and their literacy co-ordinators attend half-termly meetings. They can also purchase the services of either literacy consultants or teacher advisers through the Effectiveness Service SLA, though only a small proportion have done this.

58. In response to the schools survey, just over half the primary schools rated the authority's support for literacy as satisfactory or better, although less than one in five described it as good. Of the schools visited, some consider they have been well-supported in the first year of the strategy, others found that their most useful support came through other networks in which they are involved, especially those in the

Families of Schools. Work has started this term in the second group of 30 schools identified for intensive support. Not all headteachers are clear about why their school has been identified for this support.

59. Some primary schools receive additional help with literacy in the form of the Single Regeneration Budget-funded Sustained Reading Initiative and the Leeds Literacy Pledge, funded in part by the TEC and in part from the savings accruing from direct debit payments of the Council Tax. These initiatives have now been merged into a single strategy, engaged in interesting development work, and its co-ordinator is a member of the overall literacy support team.

60. Support to improve literacy in Key Stage 3 is just getting underway, focusing initially on the 12 secondary schools where summer literacy schools were organised. A recent advisory teacher appointment should aid the progress of this work considerably.

### **Support for Numeracy**

61. The LEA faces a similar challenge in supporting schools to meet the numeracy target set for 2002 as a 16 per cent percentage improvement is required over the 1998 results. However, the aggregate of individual schools' targets is closer to the LEA target in numeracy than in literacy, which suggests that schools are more confident about this aspect of their work, and there has already been a significant rise in attainment in 1999.

62. Attention in recent months has been on the introduction of National Numeracy Strategy (NNS), but there are other numeracy schemes in operation, notably the Barking and Dagenham project used in 17 schools in a disadvantaged area. The introduction of the NNS is too recent to permit any confident evaluation, although school visits indicated greater satisfaction and confidence in schools and a better experience of training than with NLS. Schools surveyed were particularly positive about the quality of support they have so far received. The strategy for secondary mathematics is similar to that in literacy, and includes the provision of intensive support for the 12 high schools where standards are lowest.

### **Support for ICT**

63. The LEA has quite rightly made ICT a priority in the EDP, including plans to review ICT provision and standards in schools and to intervene where there is poor practice. It has a comprehensive and challenging development plan that it formulated two years ago and for the greater part has taken forward. This plan has won deserved recognition among schools although there is some frustration over delays in implementation. However, this promising strategy has been developed against a backdrop of poor provision in schools and poor progress in ICT at Key Stages 3 and 4. Financial investment in ICT has been at a low level in many schools and much old equipment is in use.

64. Schools which were surveyed judged the support for the use of curriculum ICT to be better than the average of other LEAs. There has been considerable investment recently through the National Grid for Learning (£1.7 million in 1998/99

and £1.4 million in 1999/2000) with the LEA contributing 50 per cent. Despite this, the complexities involved with the establishing the Intranet are such that some schools may not be connected until 2002. Uptake of New Opportunities Fund training has been disappointing. The LEA has developed its own accredited programme of training and distance learning materials.

### **Support for Schools Causing Concern**

65. Fifteen Leeds schools have been found by OFSTED since 1993 to require special measures. The LEA has since acted positively by closing five of these schools. Five were deemed no longer to require special measures after periods ranging from nine months to three and a half years. A further nine schools have been identified by OFSTED as having serious weaknesses since September 1997.

66. The LEA has a poor track record in responding to these schools because it has not achieved a sufficiently rapid improvement in all cases. This is partly because until recently it had no policy for ensuring consistent support or action. In some cases a school has been given valuable advice and practical support by its link adviser, a consultant headteacher or a specialist adviser, and in one case a school closure was handled well by advisers. However, in general, the LEA has been insufficiently vigorous in taking action. It has sometimes allowed weak schools to continue for long periods without sufficient challenge, and it has tolerated low standards where it should have acted promptly and sharply. The amount of officer support and the provision of additional resourcing have varied, and have not always matched the school's needs. Often, schools have been left without the help they needed at the earliest stage in constructing a realistic action plan, or without good targeting and co-ordination of support from various services. The quality of advisers' recording of progress in these schools has been variable. In some cases it has been detailed and of value to the school's managers; in other cases it has been too generalised to be helpful to school or LEA. This year two schools, despite support from the LEA, were moved by OFSTED from the serious weakness category to the more serious category of requiring special measures, although some others monitored by HMI have been making satisfactory progress.

67. In addition to having weak schools identified by OFSTED, the LEA has compiled its own list of other schools that are a cause of concern and has graded the level of its concern in each case. Until now the schools have generally been identified in agreement with its headteacher and governors, and in some cases at the request of the school itself, but the LEA rightly intends to enforce this categorisation of a school if necessary.

68. There are currently 21 schools on the LEA's concern list, several of which were visited during this inspection. The evidence regarding these schools, and others which were previously identified, is similar to that given above. In certain cases advisers have given beneficial support to school managers, such as good targeted support for a new headteacher, guidance on curriculum issues, and in one case helping to steer the school through a long period of crisis with good analytical guidance. However, the system of support has sometimes failed to focus sufficiently clearly on the school's needs. In several schools visited, managers had welcomed the support on the grounds that it triggered the provision of additional resources but did not perceive it as an aspect

of the LEA's powers of intervention. The LEA has failed to communicate to all schools in this category the fact that it is seriously concerned about them.

69. Several schools with major problems have in fact got into this situation, or have not got out of it swiftly, partly because of LEA policies or actions, such as: delays in providing a new building on time; a school's belief that there is a "no redundancy" policy; failure to help special schools effectively to deal with the increasingly complex nature of their pupil population; or failure to establish an appropriate provision of school places.

70. Overall, the LEA has been slow in responding to national policy on weak schools. However, it has recently established procedures for supporting schools requiring special measures, with serious weaknesses, or about which it has concern. These clarify the authority's new powers of intervention, and establish a good structure of working groups which will co-ordinate support for schools in the first two categories. Schools' entitlement to support is now made much clearer. A pool of potential consultants is being established to work on secondment in schools with problems. This new policy approach is sound, but its significance was not always well understood in the schools visited. The full extent of resourcing support for schools causing concern has not been thought through by the LEA, in particular the contribution of other services, such as personnel. The LEA now has a reasonable system for monitoring weak schools and evaluating their progress at the School Improvement Strategy Group. However, the LEA's judgements need to be clearer so that schools have a clear idea of what progress they are making.

71. The LEA's procedures give attention to the interests of local elected Members who receive a confidential briefing from the authority before an OFSTED report is made public on a special measures school or one with serious weaknesses. However, reports on the progress of these schools are made insufficiently frequently to the Executive Member.

### **Support for Governors**

72. The LEA support for governors is good in places although there are some significant weaknesses. Training for governors is not evaluated effectively: the LEA has no mechanism that ensures beneficial learning is taking place and that it is put into practice. Governors are not always confident about their role and there appears to be a culture of dependency on the LEA, which is not healthy. In such circumstances it is not possible for the LEA to develop a fully effective partnership based on support and challenge.

73. There are specific concerns about the quality of training and support for target setting, which has not been sufficiently rigorous. Evidence from some school visits suggests that not all governors have been involved in target setting or had the expertise to challenge senior managers where challenge was needed. There are also concerns about the role of governors in the Shared Review process. A lack of clarity about what their role should be and how it should be fulfilled has limited their impact in this vital process.

74. However, there have been improvements since the arrival of the new Director. The LEA has appropriate mechanisms for consulting governors and involving them in decision making. Opportunities for training are extensive and governors feel well supported and informed, and they particularly value the Clerking Service. They have also welcomed the greater openness and transparency shown by the LEA over the last year. The role and contribution of governors are identified appropriately in the EDP. The part of governors in the strategic planning and management of the LEA is facilitated through a Governor Advisory Group and a Policy Group. Area governor meetings are well attended and the quality of briefings and bulletins is appreciated. Support for literacy, finance, personnel, and SEN has been particularly well received by governors although that for buildings has been disappointing.

### **Support for School Management**

75. Improving school management and leadership is an EDP priority. While the EDP sets out a number of activities, they do not constitute a comprehensive programme for the improvement of school management. Moreover, many of the measures planned to improve management and leadership in schools are either at a very early stage of development or are still to begin. The authority at present does not have the necessary expertise and experience to achieve its objectives fully.

76. As yet, little has been done to develop schools' capacity for self-evaluation and review, and the LEA does not provide guidance to schools on this aspect of their work. It intends to offer training following the new course issued by OFSTED, and for curriculum review for primary schools. Materials will be made available to secondary schools.

77. The LEA satisfactorily supports the national training schemes for senior managers in primary and secondary schools. Induction arrangements for newly appointed headteachers are satisfactory, and mentoring arrangements were clearly valued by, and valuable to, the headteachers of a few schools visited. A professional development programme for established headteachers is in operation. The authority intends to implement the new framework for headteacher appraisal and performance review. At the moment appraisal is not conducted routinely and there is no sign that the LEA uses any outcomes from appraisals to inform the design of management development activities.

78. Nevertheless, the LEA's own provision of advice and training for senior managers is adversely affected by the dearth in RAD of expertise and recent experience of secondary school management, and it has not proved possible to develop appropriate provision for special schools. Arrangements are sensibly made to buy in external support and consultancy. Secondary school headteachers (and some primary headteachers) have chosen to find their support from other sources.

## **Families of Schools**

79. For some years, the LEA has had a Family of Schools structure as a means of providing support for schools serving geographical areas of the city. These provide a range of functions, including operational links between services, liaison between primary and secondary schools and networking links for heads, deputies and subject co-ordinators in both primary and secondary schools. Each Family prepares its own development plan, and can bid for money from a central fund of £300,000 to finance special projects. There is considerable variation in the extent to which schools make use of their Family links, but in areas where the structure has been particularly active it offers valuable support for heads and teachers, providing opportunities to share good practice. Professional development is often channelled through the structure, and this enables the establishment of useful networking arrangements for follow up. In addition, different Families of Schools have used the structure to support activities, such as community drug awareness projects, support and advice schemes for single parents, attendance initiatives and curriculum development.

## **Support for Early Years**

80. Leeds City Council has made a high commitment to early years childcare and education. However, poor planning has led to some nursery places being unfilled and there is a high proportion of vacant part-time places in a significant number of nursery classes attached to primary and infant schools. Three terms of pre-school education are offered for all four year olds whose parents want it, and a further three terms for a large proportion of three year olds. The Early Years Development and Child Care Plan, agreed by the DfEE earlier this year, is a good plan which sets out appropriate targets for developing an integrated and coherent approach to meet the needs of families and communities. Active efforts are made to maintain and improve co-operative arrangements between the private and voluntary and state sectors.

81. OFSTED reports indicate that the quality of early years provision in the LEA is good, forming a secure base upon which to develop subsequent provision. There are effective partnership working arrangements. An agreed set of early childhood principles, self-evaluation frameworks and guidance materials for all sectors, backed by training courses provided by the authority, usefully promote quality provision. Recent training has focused on improving the quality of literacy and numeracy experiences for 0-5 year old children in a range of settings.

82. The authority has embarked upon a Sure Start project to serve an area of East Leeds. The project involves a diverse range of partners including the LEA, parents, the Community Health Trust, the Training and Enterprise Council and MENCAP and plans to promote a family learning culture. A bid for an Early Years Excellence Centre in this area of Leeds has also been successful.

## Recommendations

### 83. In order to make school improvement more effective:

- better information should be provided to schools about the new structure, role and intentions of the Raising Achievement Division (RAD), in particular enabling them to differentiate between the monitoring and advisory sections of the Division;
- Standards Officers should discuss with schools the practical changes schools intend to make in order to achieve their targets so that the setting of targets makes a genuine contribution to school improvement;
- the planned revision of the Shared Review process should be fully implemented ensuring that schools' self review is more rigorous, and that target setting makes a genuine contribution to strategic planning and action by the school;
- the range of external sources of expertise and advice made available to schools to complement that offered by RAD, should be extended and more effectively brokered to schools;
- a regular report should be made to the Executive Member on the progress being made by each school requiring special measures or with serious weaknesses;
- senior officers should monitor more closely the quality, consistency and effectiveness of the support provided by RAD to schools requiring special measures, with serious weaknesses or causing concern, and should scrutinise areas of weak service delivery;
- mechanisms should be devised for predicting the likely resource commitment required from the full range of services supporting improvement in schools requiring special measures or with serious weaknesses.

## **SECTION 3: STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT**

### **Corporate Planning**

84. The Council's first Corporate Plan (1999-2002) identifies a number of core values which are particularly relevant to education, namely: putting the needs of the public first; promoting equality of opportunity; countering poverty and inequality; and developing partnership working. The Council states that educational attainment is its top service priority, and the plan sets targets for improvement. It recognises the need to improve the levels of attainment of school age children and identifies several major problems in educational provision, such as the large number of surplus places and the number of unviable sixth forms. A weakness of the plan, however, is that it does not give sufficient attention to the fact that schools are themselves partners of the LEA, not just recipients of its services and policies. Schools are generally aware that the Council believes it gives high priority to education, although a significant number of headteachers interviewed thought this commitment went little further than the provision of a reasonable level of funding.

85. The quality of planning for education is variable. The weaknesses of the EDP have already been described, and the Lifelong Learning Development Plan, still in draft, does not as yet make sufficiently clear how adult education initiatives will link with work in schools. However, other corporate plans involving education are of better quality. The Children's Services Plan has good educational priorities. Similarly, the educational aspects of the management action plan for the Quality Protects initiative (for children in need) are clearly based on good factual data and forthrightly set out tangible objectives. These two plans are clear, coherent and feasible.

86. Although the intention of the Council to tackling cross-cutting issues is clearly expressed, education, training, and youth and adult education are the responsibilities of three separate Council departments. However, three Executive Directors work to the Chief Executive on issues which cover the territory of various departments, with the Executive Director (Community Services) having most relationship with the Education Department. This potentially useful management structure offers the possibility of linking Education Department initiatives with related work in other departments and with the work of external partners. However, there is no three year Executive Plan (Community Services), although the Corporate Plan states that there will be one. Some relevant co-operation has already taken place between departments but there is a need to strengthen the links. A recent inspection of the Youth and Community Service showed that links with the Education Department are poor although working arrangements with schools are sometimes good where collaborative work has been developed locally. The Training Department is not referred to in the EDP even though it already makes a contribution to school improvement through its work with certain schools.

87. The current restructuring of the Education Department includes the establishment of a Strategic Planning and Partnership Division. This is a wise move and is likely to provoke an improved focus by the Department in its strategic work with other departments.

88. The Council attaches great importance to its involvement in the Leeds Initiative Partnership, intended to be a driving force for strategic collaboration. Education ranks very high in the priorities of this group, whose membership includes universities, the health authority, the chamber of commerce and industry, the Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) and various public and private organisations. However, the action plan for its educational priority lacks detail on what the partnership's work will add to what the Education Department already does.

89. Nevertheless, there is clear evidence of increasing and useful partnership work on the ground. Co-operative work between the LEA and the Police Force, and with the Health Authority, appear particularly strong, and have led to valued work on: training for drug education; useful projects to reduce anti-social behaviour in specific localities; innovative work on the placement of children with complex problems; productive partnership work on adolescent mental health needs; and constructive work on a healthy schools programme. Collaboration with the further education sector, the Careers Guidance company, and the TEC has led to improved training and educational opportunities variously for staff, parents and pupils. The invitation to a number of partners to contribute to thinking on the provision of school places has been welcomed. The task now facing the LEA is to ensure that its own strategic thinking identifies where particular partnerships need the boost of a higher level of support from the Education Department.

90. The city operated without a permanent Director of Education for almost four years, from 1995 to 1998. During this period there was one two-year appointment, then two successive acting post-holders, with various officers having to assume temporary senior roles to fill vacancies created above them. There is overwhelming evidence from certain senior Councillors, a large number of headteachers, and some other partners, that the lack of a permanent Director for four years produced a damaging hiatus in strategic planning, for instance about high school places; that major decisions about a range of matters could not be made; and that the running of education in Leeds was characterised by drift for several years. Some officers maintain that there was little detrimental effect of this interregnum period because of their teamwork and commitment to maintaining the system, but the evidence from school visits during this inspection suggests that the damage was considerable, not least to headteachers' morale and confidence in the LEA. Elected Members should not have allowed this situation to continue for so long.

91. In the past, elected Members have given a poor lead to the education service. The majority party on the Council has given a consistently clear lead on the allocation of resources to disadvantaged areas, and schools have been very clear on the overall thrust of Council policy on education. However, many headteachers and some partners feel that, for at least the past decade, the level of interest taken by leading Councillors and some other local politicians in the operation of the Department led to a confusion in the respective roles of Members and officers. Others see this more as an aspect of a local style of educational management. Crucially, however, investigation by the District Auditor in 1996/7 found that there had been inappropriate interventions by some politicians in parts of the city. When the District Auditor continued his investigation into the management of the LEA in 1997, he reported that the Education Department had not facilitated him in this work and the investigation was left incomplete. The LEA was slow to sign up to the resulting action plan. A recruitment

consultant employed by the Council in 1997 when it was attempting to appoint a permanent Director of Education reported that political interference by Councillors was deterring a number of potential candidates. Furthermore, in 1999, actions taken by two elected Members in respect of one prospective applicant for the post of Director led to censure by the Council.

92. Overall, the evidence of this inspection is that the very high level of political involvement in the management of education in Leeds has been a potentially destabilising influence on schools. The situation is now somewhat more auspicious; undue political influence appears to be abating with the arrival of the new permanent Director and the new political structure. The current Leader of the Council is strongly committed to maximum delegation of authority to Chief Officers, especially in education. He has made very clear his determination that there will in future be greater transparency in the management of the LEA. It is noteworthy that recent appointments for service heads in the Education Department were made without the involvement of elected Members.

93. The leadership provided by senior officers in recent years has been deficient in some respects, which is unsurprising in view of the lack of a permanent Director. The LEA has experienced significant difficulties in planning the future of the education service. It has delayed in acting on the problem of small and unsuccessful high schools. There was significant slippage on the objectives set in its 1997-9 departmental Strategic Plan, and in one case a target for an important literacy initiative was adjusted downwards at an early stage. An external report was highly critical of the delays by senior management in the Education Department in reviewing procedures in response to a very serious child protection case. The LEA's application to the DfEE for an Education Action Zone failed. Its funding for the Excellence in Cities (EiC) initiative was at first withheld by the DfEE because of weaknesses in its proposal. The proposal to close two primary schools in order to reduce surplus places was rejected by the DfEE because of the lack of heed given by the LEA to the good quality of one of these schools. Its EDP, completed at the end of 1998, was of poor quality.

94. It became clear during the school visits of this inspection that many Leeds schools are behind others nationally in grasping the significance of the new role that central government has cast for LEAs. A significant number of headteachers and Chairs of governing bodies were less than clear on such major issues as the Best Value regime, and the LEA's new role as partner to self-managing schools rather than as inevitable provider of services, and, most crucially, on the LEA's new powers of intervention in schools with problems. The new Director is attempting to improve consultation arrangements, for instance by strengthening the main mechanism for discussion between senior officers and representative headteachers. However, some headteachers are still sceptical about the authority's capacity to engage in full discussion about future plans, and their scepticism will need to be overcome.

95. Although the Chief Executive states that the Council does not have a "no redundancy" policy, schools clearly believe their experience suggests there is such a policy. This perception has hindered some schools in moving forward in decisions about staffing.

96. Against these many weaknesses, however, must be set some significant strengths. The work undertaken by officers on behaviour support and on early years development has been of good quality. The Family of Schools initiative has led to some useful developments in family learning and in vocational education. Recent reports by officers to Members have been clear, although not always sufficiently analytical, and officers have held seminars and briefings for Members. There are also currently significant signs of improvement. The Director has reorganised the Education Department along very sensible lines. The new structure takes good account of the LEA's statutory obligations and is an attempt to make the Department accessible and effective. The new senior management team, mainly comprising newcomers to Leeds, recognises the need to review the structure of the EDP and has begun work on this. Detailed reworking of the EiC bid, personally overseen by the new Director, has led to a greatly improved proposal, now accepted by the DfEE. The Director has set out his priorities for the education service clearly and has won widespread support from schools for his new strategic approach which focuses on raising standards, increasing social inclusion, and improving the accountability of the LEA. Schools recognise that in his first year the Director's preoccupation has been with Council and departmental matters, but it will now be necessary for him to become a more visible presence in the city's schools.

## **Management Services**

### Financial Advice and Support

97. Financial services to schools are now generally of a good quality although a previous light touch approach left a backlog of problems for some schools. The LEA has delegated funding for financial advice but retained funding for other services. Each school has a nominated officer and buy back of the delegated service is 100 per cent. It has produced a clear, if basic, service level agreement and defined schools entitlement to support. Reconciliation of accounts, whilst paper based, works smoothly. The service targets its support to schools in deficit, in special measures or needing action arising from OFSTED reports. It plans its work well and responds to schools' requests for help promptly and effectively. Schools surveyed judged the clarity of school budget statements and advice and support on the planning and control of school finances as very good. Despite this, a few schools have reported difficulties in managing increasing levels of grant funding and a lack of clarity about how to make best use of this resource.

98. Nevertheless, some schools have financial problems because of poor strategic planning and poor management of resources by the LEA. Thirty-one schools had deficits of more than 2.5 per cent at the end of 1998/99. Ten of these were secondary schools with deficits ranging between £271,000 and £17,000. Three schools with significant and long-standing deficits still do not have realistic or approved recovery plans. Part of the problem is the large number of surplus places and the volatility in pupil numbers, which has made it nearly impossible for these schools to manage within the resources available to them. At the same time, there were also 32 schools with surpluses of greater than 10 per cent ranging from £18,000 to £83,000. The LEA is beginning to address this issue through reporting requirements arising from its 'Scheme for Financing Schools' and through follow up action from the Shared Review implemented by the Raising Achievement division.

## Personnel and Payroll Service

99. The Payroll service is fully delegated but Personnel provision is part-delegated with funding for more complex operations, policy and strategy retained at the centre. Schools judge the support for personnel to be satisfactory overall and the reliability of payroll services as better than satisfactory. However, there are some weaknesses that are crucial. The operation of what many schools regard as a “no redundancy” policy, and what some schools see as the provision of over-cautious advice in relation to capability and sickness absence, have not been consistent with the LEA’s school improvement aims. The lack of model procedures for sickness absence and the absence of coherence in approach between sickness absence, capability, and discipline have caused difficulty for some schools. A model sickness absence policy has now been prepared but it has been too long in preparation. An external report after a child protection case concluded in 1998/9 that the Education Department had a model disciplinary process that lacked integration with child protection procedures.

## Support for Administrative Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

100. Funding for the service, with the exception of hardware maintenance, has not been delegated to schools although 60 per cent will be delegated in April 2000 in response to Fair Funding regulations. Schools rated the support for hardware and software as less than satisfactory. The LEA’s own customer survey recognised the need for an improvement in response times to technical problems. Despite these weaknesses this inspection judged support for the use of ICT in school administration to be better than satisfactory. Training provided for administrative systems is adequate and matches needs, and the proposed merger of the schools curriculum IT support with management and administrative support has the potential to produce a more integrated ICT service providing better value for money.

## Building Services

101. The LEA’s support for school buildings has been unsatisfactory and been disadvantaged by under investment in relation to schools’ needs. Thirty-five days were lost as a consequence of school closures in 1998/99 on health and safety grounds. Every aspect of the Buildings Services covered in the school survey was judged by schools to be less than satisfactory and below the average of other LEAs surveyed. The level of customer care and performance monitoring has been particularly weak. The LEA has not been monitoring clearly enough the level of reactive maintenance, and as a consequence cannot make the best use of its resources. It does not have reliable data on the cost of the backlog of repairs and maintenance. However, the LEA has an appropriate policy statement on Asset Management and at the time of the inspection had completed a third of its condition and suitability surveys.

102. The LEA, however, has had increasing success with its New Deal bid. This provided £3.5 million in 1999/2000, with a similar sum from other sources for repairs and maintenance. One successful Private Finance Initiative using the expertise of Public and Private Partnerships is underway and a second well constructed bid has been approved by the government. Nevertheless, the LEA has a long way to go

before minimum standards of accommodation and the quality of technical advice and support for schools' delegated responsibilities are satisfactory. Performance management of the service is underdeveloped.

## **Summary and Evaluation**

103. Overall, management support services vary in quality from good to less than satisfactory and in the extent to which they are provider rather than consumer led. They are not yet fully delegated. Service specifications and service level agreements where they exist are generally not as robust as they might be. Although these services are generally low cost per pupil, schools do not know the full cost of individual services provided to them and as a consequence they are unable to make sound judgements about the value for money of LEA services.

## **Recommendations**

### **104. In order to improve strategic management:**

- the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council should prepare a protocol establishing the respective roles of elected Members and officers, in line with the Council's commitment to maximum delegation to officers, and in the case of the Education Department should monitor the working of this arrangement on an ongoing basis;
- the Executive Member with responsibility for Lifelong Learning and Leisure should, in line with Council policy, produce a brief for the work of each of the Lead Members who work within his portfolio;
- the Executive Director (Community Services) should, in line with Council policy, produce a three year plan identifying the action to be taken to implement policy on cross-cutting issues in this group of departments;
- the Council should review the departmental structure for educational matters in order to ensure that it promotes the development of a coherent strategy for education and lifelong learning;
- the senior management team of the Education Department should develop quality assurance procedures to ensure that service planning becomes more businesslike, with precise and realistic success criteria and a clear sense of purpose within each plan;
- common standards should be developed for specifications for services to schools; schools should be provided with clear and specific information on the cost of individual service activities so that they are able to make sound judgements about value for money;
- Building Services should be reviewed and better performance management introduced in order to improve the service's responsiveness to schools;

- the Education Department should ensure that an adequate recovery plan is in place for every school with a significant budget deficit;
- the Education Department should review its strategy for supporting governors in dealing with ineffective teaching performance;
- the Council should ensure that schools are aware that it does not operate a “no redundancy” policy.

## **SECTION 4: SPECIAL EDUCATION PROVISION**

### **Strategy**

105. After significant and necessary changes to its pattern of provision in the early nineties the LEA has lost its way in relation to special educational needs (SEN). This can be attributed in part to the absence of a clear and comprehensive SEN strategy and inadequate strategic planning. The LEA strategy for inclusion is neither clear nor well understood in schools. It is not based on an analysis of the additional costs associated with meeting more complex needs in mainstream schools that result from greater inclusion. In the school survey schools judged support at stage three of the SEN Code, training and guidance on individual education plans, and support for inclusion to be less than satisfactory. The LEA's expenditure on specialist support services and its Education Psychology service is significantly below the national average even though the proportion of Statements of SEN it maintains are above national levels. Although the LEA intends to increase provision of resource centres in mainstream schools, develop outreach from special schools, extend support from specialist services and introduce more professional development opportunities, these hopes are not yet supported by reliable estimates of costs and coherent and co-ordinated planning. There is therefore a danger that inclusion could be undermined by a decrease in mainstream schools' ability to meet fully the requirements of future placements.

106. Plans for SEN in the EDP lack cohesion and focus, indicating that the LEA has not mapped out with sufficient clarity how it hopes to establish a continuum of provision for pupils with SEN. The LEA has initiated several projects, for example the Leeds Inclusion Project, but it is not clear how each project might fit into an overall scheme for SEN provision. The LEA's policy as set out in its handbook is out of date, lacking a clear rationale for meeting its obligations including again those relating to greater inclusion.

107. This inspection does, however, recognise the successful outcomes in the early part of the last decade and the authority's good intentions in recent years. The LEA has demonstrated its commitment to the principle of inclusion of pupils with SEN in mainstream schools. It has reduced the number of its special schools and established specialist provision in 24 mainstream schools. As a result, fewer pupils attend its special schools as a proportion of its school population than nationally. Its expenditure on independent schools and on other LEA special schools is very low in comparison with other Metropolitan authorities. Furthermore, the LEA delegates a significant proportion of its SEN funding to schools, retaining relatively small sums centrally. Its overall spending on SEN is in line with the needs of its school population and close to the national average. It has, however, achieved this in the absence of a clear and comprehensive strategy for SEN. As a consequence there are some weaknesses in the provision.

### **Statutory Obligations**

108. The LEA meets most of its duties under the SEN Code of Practice adequately, with the exception of the proportion of draft Statements completed within 18 weeks. Good documentation and appropriate liaison throughout the process of assessment

facilitate partnership with parents. A criteria moderating group that considers requests for statutory assessment promotes collaborative multi-agency working. The LEA has also been successful in discontinuing a significant number of Statements last year. However, there is room for improvement. Statutory assessment is let down by the absence of clear targets and shared schedules with other agencies. The process for allocating resources allocated for new Statements is not transparent, does not ensure equity or foster a sense of fair treatment of its schools by the LEA. Annual reviews and transitional plans are monitored but evaluation of pupils' progress and outcomes is underdeveloped, resulting in inadequate recycling of resources. These weaknesses were evident in the response of schools to the school survey and during school visits.

### **Improvement and Value for Money**

109. Overall, the LEA has provided satisfactory value for money in its SEN provision in the past, but this is now deteriorating. There have been clear gains from historical changes in provision such as the reduction in its special schools, but there continues to be insufficient alignment of resources to the LEA's policies. As a consequence schools feel, with some justification, that support does not always accompany pupils' placements. Although a matrix is used to identify most categories of need relating to special school placements, it has not yet been extended to the allocation of resources for Statements in mainstream, an approach the LEA has plans to implement. Learning Support Services are well received by schools but the lack of clarity in the time allocation to schools and in objective measures for allocating support undermines their effectiveness. The time allocated by the Education Psychology service to statutory assessment and to reviews limits the resource available for early intervention or preventative work, an issue of increasing importance in schools. The increasing complexity of pupils' needs in mainstream and in special schools requires greater intervention by education psychologists if teachers are to develop appropriate strategies to meet very specific needs of individual pupils.

### **Analysis**

110. While the LEA has introduced some good practice in the past, in recent years the lack of detailed strategic planning and a comprehensive strategy for SEN has contributed to low levels of satisfaction in schools. This is clear in schools' responses to the survey, with schools judging the LEA's performance for all the SEN indicators to be below the average of other LEAs in the sample. This area of work has lacked permanent leadership over the last two years. The LEA's vision of inclusion and its practice on the ground have not been backed up by detailed development planning that is shared and owned by schools. Comprehensive management information and cost data are not available locally and this limits the understanding that schools have of the LEA's strategy and how this is to be realised. The specific role of schools and SEN services in developing and implementing the LEA's strategy is also not clear. The LEA is in a position to build on a strong foundation laid in previous years, but there is no evidence that it has thought through in sufficient detail how this is to be achieved.

## **Recommendations**

### **111. In order to improve provision for special educational needs:**

- a comprehensive strategy for SEN should be developed which articulates a clear policy for inclusion and how this is to be implemented;
- a review using Best Value principles should be undertaken of each SEN support service, assessing the alignment of resources to need;
- improvements in procedures should be introduced for monitoring and evaluating SEN provision, including effective scrutiny of Individual Education Plans and Annual Reviews of Statements.

## **SECTION 5: ACCESS**

### **The Supply of School Places**

112. The LEA's management of school places has been poor in recent years. Although overall surplus places in the primary and secondary sector have been around the national average, this masks individual school variations. Leeds has made several attempts to tackle the problem of school provision: in 1992, in 1998, and with its current high school review. It continues to have a high proportion of small schools and small sixth forms, many of which are not viable, and overdue for review. A significant number of nursery classes have empty places. Forty-six primary schools and 7 secondary schools have surplus places of 25 per cent or more. There has been an overall increase of 1070 surplus places in the primary sector since 1997 and of 244 in the secondary sector over the same period. This level of surplus represents a significant waste of resource. District Audit in 1997 estimated that removal of 75 per cent of surplus places in these schools would enable £728,000 to be available for alternative use. Schools rated 'the accuracy and effectiveness of the planning for school places' below the average for LEAs surveyed.

113. The LEA has had success with the accuracy of its forecasting of the demand for school places, achieved against a difficult backdrop of pupil movement both in and out of the authority. It has moved forward with its School Organisation Plan which provides a clear analysis of local needs and pressures. The LEA has consulted its headteachers well at an early stage in its current review of high schools and its strategic vision is coming together. The LEA's Infant Class Size Plan is also well constructed, the consultation associated with it has been open and genuine, and it is on course for full implementation. The LEA has amalgamated two high schools and closed another two over the last three years. It has also made significant reductions in funded places at nine primary schools. Nevertheless, it had permission refused by the Secretary of State for the proposed amalgamation of two others on the grounds that one of these provided a good quality of education. Whilst the LEA is beginning to get a grip on issues relating to secondary school provision it still has a long way to go.

### **Admissions**

114. The LEA's admissions service is providing a satisfactory service overall but it is patchy in quality. Parents in Leeds have a good chance of getting a place at their first preference school. In 1998 94.3 per cent were offered a place at the school for which they expressed a first preference. Information in the parents' booklets is well written and appropriate. The tracking of pupils moving into and out of the city schools could also be improved. Schools surveyed judged admissions information to be less than satisfactory. There is a need for more regular communication and data exchange between the LEA and schools to planning and co-ordination.

115. The level of appeals has shown significant increase over the last two years placing a corresponding increase in demand for appeal panels. The increase has led to appeals being heard up to the end of the summer term and beyond. There is therefore scope for the LEA to review its appeals programme so that a high

proportion of appeals are heard much earlier than is presently the case. A very high proportion of appeals (66 per cent in 1998) are upheld by appeals panels. This is another area that schools judged the LEA's performance to be below the average of other LEAs. The LEA has since provided training for appeal panels and implemented the Code of Practice for Admissions Appeals. A review of admissions criteria has also been initiated with a view to meeting a higher proportion of first preferences and reducing appeals. These actions are appropriate and the work with appeal panels is already leading to improvements.

### **Provision of Education Otherwise Than At School**

116. There is an appropriate range of provision for education other than at school: four Pupil Referral Units (PRU), tuition at home and in hospitals, and supported college and work placements at Key Stage 4. In addition to school-focused preventative work, PRUs offer short-term off-site placements in preparation for integration into school and long term off-site provision offering alternative educational programmes. Whilst these arrangements provide alternative educational provision, the main aim of each pupil's programme is to return them to mainstream as soon as possible. The strategy for supporting permanently excluded pupils is effective, with weekly updates of progress being submitted to an integration panel until the pupil is re-integrated. The integration team has been instrumental in reducing "turn-around times" for permanently excluded pupils. The average turn-around time for excluded pupils is 17.5 days for a placement after the date of exclusion, and about 6 months before most are successfully re-integrated into mainstream school. This is better than in most LEAs inspected.

117. Nevertheless, there are problems. Until very recently unsuitable premises for three out of the four referral units have inhibited provision and many pupils receive only the minimum 12.5 hours per week of provision. The LEA intends that by January 2000 all excluded pupils will be in receipt of at least 18 hours of educational provision, and by 2001 they will receive full-time provision. The monitoring of the parental choice element of education otherwise, currently overseen by the Education Welfare Service, is unsatisfactory. A significant number of home visits, to review the progress of children educated by this means remain outstanding. These have recently been recognised as an urgent priority by the service.

### **Attendance**

118. Overall, the LEA's support for improving attendance is poor. Improving attendance rates, especially at secondary level, is identified as a priority within the EDP, along with improving punctuality and behaviour. However, whilst supplementary papers to the EDP provide a clearer analysis of the problems, the activities in the EDP itself are vague and, as currently stated, lead to no clear and well-defined outcomes.

119. In response to the schools' survey, well over a third of secondary schools rated the support for promoting high attendance as poor or very poor. Whilst most primary schools were satisfied with the service, about one-sixth rated the service as poor.

120. The levels of support from the Education Welfare Service were highly unsatisfactory in several schools visited. The day-to-day working of the service is too inconsistent to support schools adequately. There are no clear service standards or referral procedures, and levels of illness within the service have been high.

121. The service is expensive compared to many other Metropolitan authorities and this, alongside low levels of satisfaction about the service, indicate that currently the Education Welfare Service represents poor value for money. The authority recognises that changes are needed. It is intended to re-align and refocus the Education Welfare Service to integrate with the distribution and operation of Excellence in Cities and, in particular, with the learning mentor and learning support programmes. Changes in personnel had already brought improvement to the levels of service at three of the schools visited.

### **Behaviour Support**

122. In response to the schools survey, the majority of schools rated the support from the Pupil Referral Service (PRS) as satisfactory or better. However, one in five primary schools and one in four secondary schools rated the overall provision as poor. School visits confirmed several aspects of strength in the LEA's provision, but serious concerns arose about inadequate levels of support in several secondary schools with major behavioural issues and significant proportions of disruptive pupils. Where this is coupled with high levels of surplus places, these schools are often taking increasing numbers of disaffected youngsters with insufficient support from the LEA. The majority of the primary schools visited where this was a theme were critical of the difficulties they experienced in getting support for behaviour.

123. The authority's spend on excluded pupils is amongst the lowest of all metropolitan Councils, and positive efforts are being made to streamline the work of the PRS and increase direct funding to schools. Whilst support overall is unsatisfactory because of the problems in a few secondary schools, the LEA has made progress in some areas. The number of permanent exclusions has fallen rapidly from a peak of 315 to 155 in 1998/99, with reductions in primary schools being especially marked. This is a significant achievement. However, the pattern for individual schools is inconsistent. The LEA has taken a major step forward in developing a clearly focused strategy for improving and maintaining good behaviour. There is a continuum of provision, with preference for keeping disaffected pupils in mainstream schools as the least restrictive and most cost effective option. The strategy is underpinned by a commitment to a quick and active response where required, although this has not always been implemented.

124. The PRS offers a good range of school-focused support for behaviour management which includes help in setting up pastoral support programmes and parent-pupil groups. A behaviour support database, designed to aid strategic management and monitoring of pupils' behaviour, is seen as a powerful tool and is used well by schools. Individual schools now set targets for reducing the numbers of permanent exclusions. The LEA has instituted a system for monitoring fixed term exclusions, which have risen proportionately to the decline in permanent exclusions.

125. It is anticipated that the introduction of the Excellence in Cities initiative will significantly change the way in which behavioural support services operate and that the refocusing of support away from off-site units and into mainstream schools will be accelerated. The PRS is assisting schools to develop learning support units, and those secondary schools visited which are involved in this initiative were positive about this support. Nevertheless, the LEA will need to focus its new initiatives on those schools where surplus places and pupil turnover have led to potentially unstable situations.

### **Health, Safety, Welfare, Child Protection**

126. In response to the schools' survey, over two-fifths of secondary schools and one in ten primary schools rated health and safety in schools and other settings to be poor or very poor. Three-quarters of those schools visited consider the authority's action as a landlord to be poor. Delays in implementing agreed building work led to the perpetuation of adverse conditions sometimes with health and safety implications.

127. An external report in 1998/9 into a very serious child protection case concluded that procedures and systems in the Education Department were inadequate and did not reflect government policy or local decisions. However, there is evidence that improvements are taking place. The department has tightened its internal child protection systems and procedures. Checks are being made to ensure that all schools have up-to-date information about child protection procedures and know the action to be taken to enable cases of suspected or identified abuse to be properly considered and pursued. A sequence of child protection training for governors is underway. Also, there has been increased activity in improving school security and preparing security strategies. Training courses on school security and personal safety are broadly welcomed by schools. Relationships with the police and crime prevention teams are reported to be effective. An active drug education programme is being developed and schools welcome the good quality materials and support from the different agencies that is helping to deliver it.

### **Looked-After Children**

128. The Social Services and Education departments collaborate well in making provision for looked-after children and in formulating education plans. Over the recent past the incidence of exclusions for this group has declined and currently all looked-after children have a school place. For a significant minority of these pupils, attendance rates are low and there is a recognised need for rapid co-ordinated activity to solve this problem.

129. Targets have been set to show how the authority intends to raise the educational achievement of looked-after children. The results for 1998 key stage tests and GCSE/GNVQ examinations illustrate poor standards achieved for all age groups of children in care. The provisional results for 1999 demonstrate some improvement but there is much to be done to improve outcomes overall. Although the different departments hold data on looked-after children, there is no common database to collate the details. As yet all those responsible for the education and welfare of looked-after children do not have access to the full set of information that

would allow close monitoring of attainment and progress and enable a precise evaluation of any potential disadvantage experienced by children in care.

### **Ethnic Minority Children**

130. The LEA has been slow to monitor the attainment of minority ethnic pupils, but now has very useful information which shows marked differences between the performance of various groups: Bangladeshi-origin and Pakistani-origin pupils attain below the LEA average at KS2 and at GCSE, and Black Caribbean pupils attain below the average at GCSE. There are some indications that the lower performance of some of these groups may be associated with local economic disadvantage. The LEA is now giving increasing attention to monitoring attainment and has recently begun to provide each school with an ethnically-based analysis of its results.

131. The main thrust of the LEA's support has been its long established use of Curriculum and Parental Support Assistants (CPSAs) in primary and secondary schools. These staff, nearly all of whom were black and/or bilingual, were placed in schools where their own language and cultural background would be appropriate to pupils' needs. This was an ambitious scheme, with a subordinate but very important aim of encouraging CPSAs to progress towards teaching qualifications and thus help to raise the low numbers of minority ethnic teachers in Leeds. Demographic change has made this policy difficult to maintain and some groups of pupils have not benefited from the mother-tongue support that was originally intended. Equally, the targeting of support has been weak as it has not in the past been precisely related to pupils' academic needs. Evidence now suggests that the CPSA scheme had limited success: the most recent data suggests that Black Caribbean and Pakistani-origin pupils' success in English, relative to that of other pupils in their school, has been no greater in primary schools with CPSAs than those without. Furthermore, only about 10% of CPSAs have progressed to qualified teacher status. The LEA's evaluation of the scheme has usefully identified some weaknesses inherent in it, and it intends to increase the use of EAL teachers in future.

132. The LEA has also run a large number of other projects to support minority ethnic pupils. However, they have been established at particular times for particular purposes and they have not led to the development of a coherent and long term strategy to improve schools' ability to meet all pupils' needs. Monitoring of the effect of projects has not been strong enough. The EDP includes a range of activities concerning minority ethnic support, but these are not clearly described and do not form a meaningful whole. The EDP is particularly unclear on what action the authority intends to take overall to boost the performance of Black Caribbean pupils. Overall, this is a generally unconvincing programme.

133. Specialist officers from the LEA's Equality, Language and Learning Agency contribute to the Standards Team's Shared Review process. This is a good demonstration of the authority's desire to bring minority ethnic issues to the forefront of its interaction with schools. However, review reports seen during the inspection did not always give sufficient attention to ethnicity issues.

134. The LEA has issued guidelines to schools on dealing with racial harassment, updated this year in response to the Macpherson Report, and also provides

supporting materials for schools. The authority was not successful in the past in persuading all schools to comply fully with the monitoring procedure. It has simplified the system and requires a summary report from each school twice a year, and asks governing bodies to discuss relevant issues annually. The LEA recognises the need to boost minority ethnic representation in the teaching force and has established a campaign to do this. Only about 1 per cent of Leeds teachers are from Black ethnic groups.

135. The city responded well to the educational needs of a large number of Kosovan refugees who arrived earlier this year. The Education Department facilitated a positive response by a number of schools and usefully committed significant resources to settling these children in schools.

### **Social Exclusion**

136. The LEA has not yet developed effective strategies for helping to prevent social exclusion. Its support for attendance is inconsistent and its behaviour support, although based on good principles, is insufficient. Despite long-standing and varied work for support for minority ethnic pupils, the attainment of certain groups is below average. The LEA has rightly set targets which embody additional challenge for these groups, but its overall strategy for minority ethnic support is unconvincing. The number of minority ethnic teachers is too low. The most vulnerable secondary schools are obliged to receive disaffected pupils from elsewhere because the overall provision of places means that they have places available. Against this must be set the very significant fall in permanent exclusions, the increasing progress that is being made in reintegrating excluded pupils into mainstream schools, and the support that is given to schools' drugs education programmes. The picture is therefore very mixed, a fact which appears to derive from the lack of consistent overview given to this area of work. The recent restructuring of the Education Department is intended to bring a better focus to social inclusion work.

### **Recommendations**

#### **137. In order to improve pupils' access to education:**

- a long term strategy should be developed for the provision of school places in nursery, primary and secondary sectors which includes comprehensive benchmarking for future provision;
- the allocation of Education Welfare Service time to schools, and its use, should be reviewed and specifications should be written governing how education welfare officers will work with schools;
- the Education Department should ensure that appropriate levels of support are given to schools which receive large numbers of disaffected pupils and should work towards agreement with headteachers about the admission of excluded pupils on equitable basis.
- the Education Department and the Social Services Department should move ahead as quickly as possible on plans for a common database for looked-after children;

- a review should be made of all EDP activities concerning minority ethnic support in order to establish a coherent strategy: this may entail creating a new EDP priority focusing explicitly on raising the attainment of minority ethnic pupils;
- the Shared Review system should be reviewed to give greater focus to issues concerning the achievement of minority ethnic pupils and of the need to oppose racism.

## **APPENDIX: RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **In order to improve the strategy for school improvement,**

the Council should:

- ensure that the roles and executive authority levels of the Lead Members for Lifelong Learning and Leisure are defined in line with Council policy;
- review the role of Scrutiny Board 3 in order to judge whether it can realistically combine scrutiny of education with its other tasks;
- ensure that the Community Involvement Teams mesh appropriately with the work of the Education Department and the development of individual schools;
- review the schemes which allow local Councillors to influence the provision of additional grants to individual schools, in order to ensure that funding meets priority needs.

the Education Department should:

- ensure that the proposed Joint Development Planning process fully involves schools in discussing the priorities of the EDP and the implications for their own development planning;
- revise the EDP to ensure that there is greater coherence in the programme of activities, that activities are more clearly defined, and that appropriate success criteria are specified for each activity;
- review its resource planning in order to reflect the needs of each function as detailed in the EDP.

### **In order to make school improvement more effective:**

- better information should be provided to schools about the new structure, role and intentions of the Raising Achievement Division (RAD), in particular enabling them to differentiate between the monitoring and advisory sections of the Division;
- Standards Officers should discuss with schools the practical changes schools intend to make in order to achieve their targets so that the setting of targets makes a genuine contribution to school improvement;
- the planned revision of the Shared Review process should be fully implemented ensuring that schools' self review is more rigorous, and that target setting makes a genuine contribution to strategic planning and action by the school;

- the range of external sources of expertise and advice made available to schools to complement that offered by RAD, should be extended and more effectively brokered to schools;
- a regular report should be made to the Executive Member on the progress being made by each school requiring special measures or with serious weaknesses;
- senior officers should monitor more closely the quality, consistency and effectiveness of the support provided by RAD to schools requiring special measures, with serious weaknesses or causing concern, and should scrutinise areas of weak service delivery;
- mechanisms should be devised for predicting the likely resource commitment required from the full range of services supporting improvement in schools requiring special measures or with serious weaknesses.

**In order to improve strategic management:**

- the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council should prepare a protocol establishing the respective roles of elected Members and officers, in line with the Council's commitment to maximum delegation to officers, and in the case of the Education Department should monitor the working of this arrangement on an ongoing basis;
- the Executive Member with responsibility for Lifelong Learning and Leisure should, in line with Council policy, produce a brief for the work of each of the Lead Members who work within his portfolio;
- the Executive Director (Community Services) should, in line with Council policy, produce a three year plan identifying the action to be taken to implement policy on cross-cutting issues in this group of departments;
- the Council should review the departmental structure for educational matters in order to ensure that it promotes the development of a coherent strategy for education and lifelong learning;
- the senior management team of the Education Department should develop quality assurance procedures to ensure that service planning becomes more businesslike, with precise and realistic success criteria and a clear sense of purpose within each plan;
- common standards should be developed for specifications for services to schools; schools should be provided with clear and specific information on the cost of individual service activities so that they are able to make sound judgements about value for money;
- Building Services should be reviewed and better performance management introduced in order to improve the service's responsiveness to schools;

- the Education Department should ensure that an adequate recovery plan is in place for every school with a significant budget deficit;
- the Education Department should review its strategy for supporting governors in dealing with ineffective teaching performance;
- the Council should ensure that schools are aware that it does not operate a “no redundancy” policy.

**In order to improve provision for special educational needs:**

- a comprehensive strategy for SEN should be developed which articulates a clear policy for inclusion and how this is to be implemented;
- a review using Best Value principles should be undertaken of each SEN support service, assessing the alignment of resources to need;
- improvements in procedures should be introduced for monitoring and evaluating SEN provision, including effective scrutiny of Individual Education Plans and Annual Reviews of Statements.

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- the Education Department and the Social Services Department should move ahead as quickly as possible on plans for a common database for looked-after children;
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- the Shared Review system should be reviewed to give greater focus to issues concerning the achievement of minority ethnic pupils and of the need to oppose racism.



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