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IN EDUCATION

**INSPECTION OF
THE CITY OF WESTMINSTER
LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY**

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INTRODUCTION

1. The inspection of the City of Westminster Local Education Authority (LEA) 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 (December 2001)* which focuses on the effectiveness of the local education authority (LEA) work to support school improvement. The inspection also took account of the Local Government Act 1999, insofar as it relates to work undertaken by the LEA on Best Value. The previous inspection took place in spring 2000; the report was published in May 2000.

2. The current 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 the local authority's elected members, focus groups of headteachers, other staff and governors, staff in the education department and in other council departments and representatives of the LEA's partners. Use was made of the LEA's own self evaluation. In addition, a questionnaire, seeking views on aspects of the LEA's work was circulated to all its schools. The response rate to the questionnaire was 55 per cent. The inspection also took account of relevant evidence from national monitoring work by Her Majesty's Inspectors'.

COMMENTARY

3. The City of Westminster LEA, small by national standards, based at London's business and political centre serves an ethnically diverse, highly mobile and increasing population with relatively high levels of disadvantage. Its high level of funding compared to the majority of other LEAs does not fully compensate for the difficulties in recruiting and retaining key staff of high quality and expertise, both at teacher, school management and consultant level. Consequently as an inner London authority it is under great pressure to maintain a number of its services and carry out statutory functions.

4. Overall, pupils' attainment is below national averages and averages in similar authorities at secondary schools, but above at primary level. However, the recent rate of improvement in attainment in all key stages has been faster than that seen nationally. No school requires special measures or has serious weakness. This has been a significant achievement to which recent changes in the LEA have contributed significantly.

5. The first inspection, in 2000, judged the LEA to have more weaknesses than strengths. This has been reversed and the authority, in a period of transition, is improving rapidly. While there remain some important areas of weakness, some of which were identified at the time of the last inspection, substantial improvements have been made. In corporate leadership there has been a shift in political commitment and support for education. Good progress has been made with school improvement and there is a greater trust and confidence between the council, education department and headteachers. There is good evidence of improving performance in the schools and a readiness in the LEA to work with outside partners. However, some important weaknesses remain.

The following functions are particular strengths:

- the effectiveness of the LEA's identification of, and intervention in, under-performing schools;
- the quality of the leadership provided by elected members;
- the quality of the leadership provided by the director and some senior staff;
- the extent to which the LEA meets its statutory requirements and achieves value for money in relation to children in public care; and
- catering services;

6. The LEA performs the majority of its functions adequately or better. There are weaknesses in the following functions:

- the strategy and value for money for special educational needs (SEN);
- support to schools for raising standards in information and communication technology (ICT) and support to schools for administrative ICT;
- the effectiveness of services to support school management in particular financial services, property management; and
- promoting social inclusion in particular education otherwise than at schools (EOTAS); and the supply of school places.

7. Members and officers have focused their work on the correct priorities. Significant progress in the school improvement strategy, corporate leadership and support for school improvement has been made in less than two years. Some of these achievements are very significant and are the result of senior managers with vision and strong determination to get it right. The Education Development Plan (EDP) is a much stronger document than it was originally. The director of education has made brave and difficult decisions to focus the authority on the correct improvement strategy. His drive to get the secondary review through the revised time set is tight but not unachievable. There remain some key areas to address in relation to budget management and control. Members of the senior team recognise the task before them to address the weaknesses in SEN, social inclusion and secondary education through a full and thorough consultation with the wider community.

8. Overall the performance of the LEA is now satisfactory. Corporate leadership is now strong and has a recent record of tackling difficult areas successfully. The LEA has good capacity for further improvement and the ability to address the recommendations in this report.

SECTION 1: THE LEA STRATEGY FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Context

9. The City of Westminster LEA serves a very diverse and growing population. As at the time of the last inspection there are still great differences in affluence, ranging from some very wealthy wards to those in great poverty. Indicators of disadvantage rank Westminster well below average, on the index of local deprivation. While the percentage of unemployed adults has fallen recently, the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals remains well above the national average at 41.9 per cent and 36.4 per cent, compared to 19.7 per cent and 17.6 per cent nationally for primary and secondary age respectively. It is above the proportions of similar authorities for both primary and secondary.

10. Westminster has a very high number of denominational schools in the secondary sector, which are attended by children living outside the city. This puts particular strain on already crowded schools. There are two single-sex girls' schools and one single-sex boys' schools. Choices of schools for a good proportion of pupils, and in particular boys, are limited. In addition, a high percentage of pupils with statements of SEN attend special provision outside the borough.

11. The number of pupils of school age has increased. Primary school rolls are expected to rise by between 300 and 400 pupils, and approximately 650 extra places will be required in secondary schools over the next four years. The proportion of pupils of minority ethnic origin has increased to 60 per cent, above the national average of 12 per cent and similar authorities'¹ average of 50 per cent. There are high percentages of pupils of black African (11.2 per cent) black Caribbean and Bangladeshi (10.3 per cent) heritage.

12. The proportion of pupils on the register for SEN is close to the national level, just above in primary (25.6 per cent) and below in secondary (21.1 per cent). The percentage of pupils with statements of SEN is 3.8 per cent. The percentage (39 per cent) of pupils with statements of SEN taught in special provision outside the LEA is well above similar authorities (8.1 per cent) and national averages (5.9 per cent). Seventy three per cent of pupils over the age of four attend full or part-time education in early years settings and 64 per cent of three year olds have a pre-school place.

13. The LEA maintains 54 schools. There are eight secondary schools, of which seven have sixth form provision, 40 primary schools of which three are infant and three are junior. Nursery units are attached to 28 schools and there are four nursery schools. One of the four nurseries is an early excellence centre. There are two special schools. The LEA has no registered pupil referral units (PRU) but all secondary schools have learning support units as part of an Excellence in Cities (EiC) programme. There are six Beacon schools. The authority has embarked on a wide-ranging consultation on secondary school provision. This aims to reshape the

¹ Similar authorities to Westminster include Kensington and Chelsea, Camden, Hammersmith and Fulham, Haringey, and Islington.

current pattern and organisation of schools to meet future needs and intends to report in summer 2003.

Performance

14. Overall, the performance of schools is below the national average, but generally above that found in similar authorities. The rate of improvement in pupils' attainment, in the last three years and in all key stages, has been better than that seen in similar authorities and above the national average. The removal of all schools from special measures or serious weaknesses typifies the general improvement achieved.

15. OFSTED inspections of schools indicate that pupils' attainment on entry to full-time education is above that of similar authorities and nationally. The baseline assessment scheme currently used by schools also indicates that attainment is above national levels.

16. In 2001, at the end of Key Stage 1, the proportion of pupils attaining Level 2 and above was below the national average in reading, writing and in mathematics. It was above the level in national curriculum assessments of similar authorities.

17. At the end of Key Stage 2 the proportion of pupils achieving Level 4 or above in 2001 in English (77.5 per cent) was in line with national average and above similar authorities. In mathematics (76.7 per cent) it was well above the national average and statistical neighbours. In science (90.1 per cent) it was above the national average and well above that of similar authorities. The 2002 targets for English and mathematics are challenging but in view of the improvement achieved in recent years, they seem attainable.

18. At Key Stage 3, the proportion of pupils achieving Level 5 or above in all three core subjects was below the national average in English and mathematics and well below in science. It was above similar authorities in English and mathematics and in line in science. Boys' attainment compared with girls is low.

19. At the end of Key Stage 4, 38.8 per cent of pupils achieved five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C, which is below the national average (48.4 per cent) and below similar authorities (40 per cent). However, this represents an increase in the last three years of 3.8 per cent compared to 0.1 per cent in similar authorities and 1.8 per cent nationally. Twice as many girls (51.9%) as boys (25.7%) gain five GCSE at A*-C, and this indicates a significant under-performance of boys at this key stage.

20. In 2001, 94.4 per cent of pupils achieved at least one GCSE at grade A* - G, which is in line with similar LEAs but below the national average. However, significant gains have been made in the last three years against both similar authorities and national average. There is little difference between the performance of boys and girls.

21. Bangladeshi pupils have improved their attainments at GCSE where their results are close to the LEA averages on all indicators. Black Caribbean pupils have

also made good progress but their overall results remain low. At Key Stage 2 progress of both groups of pupils continues to fluctuate from year to year.

22. OFSTED school inspections indicate that the LEA has no schools in serious weaknesses or special measures for the first time since 1993; this represents a significant improvement in the quality of education in the authority. There is a high proportion of good or very good schools among the primary schools, although one school requires some significant improvement. A high proportion of secondary schools also require significant improvement.

23. Attendance rates are below the national averages in both primary and secondary schools. Unauthorised absence is well above the national figures for primary and secondary schools. The rate of permanent exclusions is in line with the national figure for primary and well above the national figure in secondary schools.

Funding

24. Westminster's standard spending assessment (SSA) per pupil for 2001/02 is below average compared with similar authorities and other inner London authorities, although well above the average for England as a whole.

25. The council has consistently spent above SSA on education and increases in SSA for education have been passed on in full to Westminster schools. As a result, overall revenue spending per pupil in 2001/02 was significantly above the average for inner London authorities and highest for primary. Delegated funding is in line with other inner London authorities and the national average of 85 per cent.

26. Retained expenditure is the fifth highest (out of 13) for inner London boroughs. However, strategic management retention is relatively low, while funding retained for school improvement and access significantly exceeds the average. The LEA planned central spending on SEN is significantly lower than at the time of the previous inspection, following substantial delegation to schools.

(£ per pupil)	Strategic management	School improvement	Access	SEN	TOTAL
Westminster	78	128	172	202	580
Similar authorities	112	67	149	249	577
Inner London LEAs (generic group)	118	59	150	232	558
English average	101	29	127	158	436
as % of neighbours	70%	192%	115%	81%	101%
as % of generic group	66%	218%	115%	87%	104%
as % of English average	77%	443%	136%	128%	133%
Rank order in generic group (total 12)	12	1	2	9	5

27. Westminster has benefited from some major funding, such as EiC, Education Action Zone (EAZ) and New Deal for Schools (capital), which have increased significantly in the past two years. The external auditor has commented on the

absence of central co-ordination of grant claims and criticised lateness, attributing this to the lack of co-ordination. In 2000 the council was successful in securing a major Private Finance Initiative (PFI) to rebuild a secondary school, although this did not progress because of a decision by the governing body.

Council structure

28. The council consists of 47 Conservative and 13 Labour members. Changes to the structure and decision making processes of the council have taken place in line with the Local Government Act 2000. It re-structured its constitution in September 2001 based on a leader and cabinet model. There are cabinet members for both schools and lifelong learning.

29. A member of the minority party chairs the education overview and scrutiny committee. Members of the scrutiny committee include representatives from headteachers, diocesan members and parent governors. The present structure of the education department consists of the director of education, who reports directly to the chief executive, and three assistant directors, for school effectiveness, lifelong learning and development. The head of finance completes the leadership team of the directorate.

30. A new chief executive was appointed in April 2000, and a new leader of the council in May 2000. One of three immediate policy priorities was to improve the overall performance of the LEA through a stronger political lead to education. In April 2001 the community was consulted about the policy document 'Civic Renewal' which includes five themes, one of which is the Education Guarantee programme. This affirms the council's commitment to repositioning the LEA in an effective strategic partnership with schools to raise educational standards and promote social inclusion. This policy has been adopted by the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP).

The LEA strategy for school improvement

31. The LEA responded to the recommendations in the first inspection report by making suitable revisions to the original EDP known as EDP1. Since 2000, progress in implementing the revised EDP1 shows significant strengths and few weaknesses. The imprecision of success criteria in EDP1 has made it difficult to achieve robust evaluation, but this shortcoming has been removed in EDP2. There are effective systems for monitoring the plan that appropriately involve elected members and schools.

32. Good progress has been made as a result of the implementation of EDP1 in the priorities for schools causing concern. Three of the eight secondary schools and one primary school that had serious weaknesses or required special measures were removed from these categories more than a year ago. The LEA now has no school identified by OFSTED with serious weaknesses or requiring special measures. The training for school self-evaluation and for the use of data and target setting has been effective. The work is beginning to have an impact on the quality of teaching, especially in targeted secondary schools, and the management of schools overall has improved. The LEA's support for literacy and numeracy has made satisfactory

progress and the dissemination of good practice is improving. By contrast, progress in implementing the curriculum strategy for ICT has been unsatisfactory.

33. In 2000 the LEA met its targets for English and mathematics at Key Stage 2 and for primary exclusions and unauthorised absence. Targets for pupils in public care were exceeded. The 2000 GCSE targets and those for unauthorised absence in secondary schools, however, were not met.

34. The EDP 2002-2007 (EDP2) has significant strengths and few weaknesses. The audit draws on a good range of data and focuses its priorities for school improvement through the five national priorities and two local ones. These are attendance and exclusions and recruitment and retention of staff. The summary and evaluation of EDP1 are honest and fair. There is a clear analysis of its cost effectiveness and the strengths and weaknesses are set out in a clear table.

35. Targets are challenging, more so for Key Stages 3 and 4, than Key Stages 1 and 2. Full use is made of all the indicators available. There has been considerable progress in standards in the primary age range. The LEA targets are comparable with schools' aggregated targets, except at Key Stage 3. The authority recognises the challenge before it in improving standards at Key Stage 4 in GCSE and in improving attendance.

36. The school improvement strategy has many strengths and few weaknesses. There are clear links between actions, activities, targets, priorities and success criteria. There are clear lines of responsibility and accountability, and the programme is linked to other plans such as steps taken to address recruitment and retention of teachers through training and support.

37. Monitoring and evaluation of the plan set out clear procedures of analysis and interpretation of data and information from inspection reports as well as findings from school self-review activities and audits by external consultants. However there is no note of the time-scale within which evaluation is required to be completed.

The allocation of resources to priorities

38. The allocation of resources to priorities by the LEA is now satisfactory and this is in line with the council's self-assessment. Significant progress has been made since the last inspection, which judged this area to be unsatisfactory because, despite the council's commitment to education, resources were not well linked to priorities. Activities were not targeted with clarity on educational outcomes. A robust whole council review of performance and finance has since taken place, resulting in a redistribution of resources and revised priorities.

39. Westminster has consistently spent above SSA on education; this now has a clearer focus than previously. Currently spending exceeds SSA by 11 per cent. The education service has been allocated an additional £1.3m in revenue funding, together with £250,000 to tackle key weaknesses. The council's three-year financial planning cycle is securely based in service priority planning and focused on targets and priorities in the EDP.

40. There are weaknesses in the management and focus of SEN funding. Although delegation to schools in the past two years has increased significantly, the funding is still poorly focused. The LEA has inadequate identification procedures for pupils with SEN and for monitoring the impact of spending on educational outcomes. As a result, there are inconsistencies across the borough. The 2001-2002 education budget has been overspent by £1.6m, largely as a result of these weaknesses in the delegation, particularly for SEN and the costs of statements. Belatedly, more regular monitoring of spending on special educational needs is now undertaken at senior level; a model for profiling expenditure is under development. Elsewhere, improvements are in hand to secure better financial reporting and monitoring.

41. A Best Value review of assessment and purchasing in relation to SEN concluded that more effective strategies were needed to reduce referrals for assessment by early intervention. The budget for 2002-2003 still reflects this trend in increased spending. However, there are savings targets in subsequent years based on anticipated outcomes from the introduction of the LEA's inclusive education strategy, recently subject to consultation. At present the methodology for allocating delegated funds for SEN is being reviewed.

42. Satisfactory progress has been made in a fundamental review of the schools' funding formula. Nevertheless, although the redistribution of funding benefits small schools, deficit budgets are frequently found in smaller schools. Currently six secondary and eleven primary schools have deficit budgets. Action plans to secure recovery are now in place, although it is too early to judge their effectiveness.

Promoting continuous improvement including Best Value

43. Structures for achieving Best Value are satisfactory and in line with the council's self-assessment. These were poor at the last inspection but the LEA has started to put in place appropriate strategies for improvement which encompass its best value programme.

44. The council has become much more customer-focused. It has a clear performance management framework and a coherent planning cycle for developing service plans and targets. The LEA has more to do to develop effective consultation with schools, parents and its diverse community, although it acknowledges the need. A key element to the success of this is the extent to which all staff can be engaged and develop this focus in their work. Corporately, much progress has been made to put systems in place. However, at service level progress has been limited to date, although pockets of good practice exist. Developing joint approaches with other inner London authorities, as has already started, is a positive step.

45. The Best Value Performance Plan (BVPP) and management arrangements for Best Value have been judged by the external auditor to be satisfactory, although there are weaknesses. The early Best Value review programme contained too many reviews, often with a small remit and unclear focus. Consequently, Best Value reviews have been variable in quality and effectiveness. The review of catering involved consultation with all stakeholders. It made effective use of benchmarking about other providers and performance indicators leading to clear improvements. The service continues to develop. In contrast the review of assessment and

purchasing for SEN was limited in its scope and breadth of consultation; it is unlikely that the action plan will lead to noticeable service improvement.

SECTION 2: SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Summary of effectiveness of the LEA's support for school improvement

46. The LEA has given effective support to school improvement. Its monitoring, challenge and intervention strategies are well understood by schools; the authority has come a long way to gain the confidence and support of schools since the last inspection. It now has a sound strategy to tackle under-achievement. Headteachers and governors know the categories for schools causing concern and the level of support available to them. The LEA uses the information available to it to identify schools causing concern and has an impressive record with under-performing schools. The director and key senior staff give a strong lead in this area and are prepared to take necessary steps to intervene.

47. Provision for curriculum support and challenge is satisfactory overall, although there are still weaknesses in the support for curriculum use of ICT. Support for school management is satisfactory and headteachers and governors are well informed. However, there are some weaknesses in services to support school management notably financial, property and ICT school administration services. While personnel services remain satisfactory, catering services are good having benefited from a Best Value review which included extensive consultation.

Monitoring, challenge and intervention

48. The LEA's approach to monitoring, challenge and intervention is satisfactory with few areas of major weakness. Recommendations from the first inspection have been addressed and procedures have improved. The LEA is implementing the Code of Practice for LEA/School relations effectively and its work has a sharper focus on supporting achievement. The confidence and support of schools have been regained.

49. The definition of monitoring, challenge and intervention is clear and informs the implementation of EDP priorities and the use the LEA makes of schools' performance data. As a result there is now a sharp focus on areas of greatest need both for individual schools, underachieving groups of pupils and specific management issues. Headteachers were consulted effectively on the development of the criteria for identifying schools causing concern and, in the main, schools have a secure understanding of them and the associated procedures.

50. The LEA has improved its systems and capacity for monitoring the quality and standards in schools at the same time as reducing the allocated time for regular monitoring visits. School development officers and assigned consultants make monitoring visits to all schools for up to three days per year in primary and two days per year in secondary and this is relatively high for successful schools. Schools also have access to targeted support from LEA or brokered services, based upon the needs identified. Some schools and school development officers are unclear about when this support is free to schools and when a charge is made.

51. The current LEA procedures for developing autonomy for schools are welcomed by most headteachers. The systems neither hinder successful self-

management nor leave schools without the challenge or intervention they need. Officers have a strong commitment to self-managing schools. Training for self-evaluation, in areas of school improvement, has been good; the Nord Anglia consultants providing the secondary school improvement programme offer effective self-review approaches to senior staff and subject departments. The involvement of governors is less effective. Self-evaluation training has been provided and well attended, but not governing bodies routinely receive the notes of visit that go from school development officers and assigned consultants to the headteacher.

Recommendations

In order to further improve effectiveness and efficiency of monitoring of schools:

- establish a more differentiated approach to monitoring that ensures successful schools are visited less frequently;
- incorporate improved evidence for use in monitoring; and
- ensure all governing bodies receive notes about school visits.

The effectiveness of the LEA's work in monitoring and challenging schools

52. The LEA's recent work in monitoring, challenging and intervening in schools is satisfactory with few areas of major weakness. The provision and use of performance data for monitoring and target setting are good. The revised EDP1 in 2000 enabled a more targeted approach to areas of greatest need and better co-ordination of the intervention in schools through delivery teams. The actions have been effective in raising the quality of education, especially in some secondary schools.

53. Monitoring has become better informed in the past two years. Information and data are gathered via school development officers, assigned consultants and the data team, enabling the school effectiveness group to identify needs and secure prompt and early intervention. The information available includes good data on social inclusion and attainment data plus information on school leadership, management and educational quality, but no financial data. Information on the attainment and progress of pupils with special educational needs is not reliable. However, more recently the LEA has used information to anticipate difficulties and act promptly with schools, enabling them to resolve issues successfully.

54. Helpful individual school profiles which include data benchmarked against all other schools in the LEA are produced. The profile is well timed to reach schools in early autumn, followed by a finalised version a few months later. Guidance and training on the use of the data for headteachers, staff and governors are satisfactory. This is a recent development and, therefore, its impact on raising attainment, especially in some secondary schools has yet to become evident. The LEA's procedures for using this data to set targets with schools have become increasingly rigorous and challenging. The adoption of such a precise analysis to inform future

teaching strategies has been unwelcome in some secondary school departments, but has had an impact on helping schools to pinpoint developments to raise standards.

The effectiveness of the LEA's work with under-performing schools

55. Support for under-performing schools is now good. The LEA has made impressive progress since the previous inspection, when this area was judged to be unsatisfactory. The confidence of schools has been gained and the LEA's role has been clarified. The LEA now has a sound strategy both to support schools causing concern and tackle underachievement. Importantly both have high corporate priority in the council's "Civic Renewal" policy. The director and the assistant director for school effectiveness both give a strong personal lead in the LEA's work with under-performing schools. They are prepared to intervene and use statutory powers where necessary; members are kept closely informed and receive regular reports.

56. The authority has devised five categories to assist the monitoring of school performance from highest performance (category one) to OFSTED special measures or serious weakness (category five). The two categories of LEA concern (three and four) are intended first to give early warning and then trigger intervention. Category three indicates concern without specific intervention, perhaps as a result of emerging under performance. Category four indicates formal LEA intervention requiring an improvement plan with specific targets and monitoring. When appropriate, an exit strategy reduces the levels of support as the school becomes more effective. Case studies showed these procedures to be effectively planned, rigorous and well carried through.

57. The first LEA inspection identified problems of clarity of role caused by the use of a consultant contractor, in secondary schools; this has been addressed successfully. The secondary curriculum development programme now co-ordinates all activity under its project director, who also leads on support for schools causing concern. As a result the LEA has successfully initiated formal intervention in two secondary schools since the last inspection, working in close collaboration with the contractor. At school level, effective action has been ensured through a delivery team which brings together all key players (school, governors, contractor and LEA). That approach also ensures involvement of specialist initiatives such as advanced skills teachers (AST), EiC and the EAZ. Secondary schools, in particular, have commented very positively about the new framework.

Support for literacy

58. Support for literacy remains satisfactory, as it was at the time of the first inspection. The authority assessed this area as satisfactory and as a result it was subject to a 'light touch' inspection. The priority in the EDP to raise standards has been largely achieved. Standards continue to be on a rising trend and targets set for 2002 should be achieved. Achievable targets have been set for 2004.

59. The effective strategy, well understood by schools, is implemented through the language, achievement and basic skills service which is a key part of the school effectiveness group. The service is currently under review through the Best Value

process. There are effective links between Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant co-ordinators and literacy consultants.

Support for numeracy

60. Support for numeracy is satisfactory as it was at the time of the first inspection. The authority assessed this area as satisfactory and as a result it was subject to a 'light touch' inspection. Mathematics standards are rising, particularly at Key Stage 2. Targets for 2002 are challenging but achievable on past performance. Achievable targets are in place for 2004.

Support for information and communication technology (ICT)

61. Support for raising standards in the support for curriculum use of ICT is unsatisfactory. This area was poor in the last report and, although the LEA has reported it as improved, it is still unsatisfactory. Action on the recommendation, in the last report, to implement effective arrangements for the development and support for curriculum ICT has been slow, at times unco-ordinated and often only reactive to national projects and funding. There has been an analysis of schools' needs, but action has been insufficiently focused on raising standards.

62. The percentage of pupils at Key Stage 4 completing nationally accredited ICT courses is 16.5 per cent, which is low. Schools are offered guidance about assessment of ICT skills, work is moderated and targets have been set for schools to achieve by 2004. There are no systems in place to collate and analyse pupils' achievement in ICT and information cannot be transferred electronically between schools.

63. The 2002/03 plans will include targets for pupils' attainment in ICT at the end of each key stage, but as yet there is insufficient evidence to set these targets. Currently, pupils' work is assessed at co-ordinators' meetings and teachers' assessments completed at the end of Key Stage 3 and through accredited exams at Key Stage 4. There is no mechanism for sharing good practice, across the LEA, through the Intranet or newsletters.

64. National Grid for Learning (NGfL) resources have been appropriately allocated to schools and all schools are connected to the London Grid for Learning (LGfL). The national targets for resources have been met. In addition, all schools have had major funding for hardware and software upgrades. A major project supported by EAZ funding, to put interactive white boards into schools, is currently under way and supported by training. School ICT plans are monitored effectively by school development officers in primary schools and by Nord Anglia in secondary schools.

65. The majority of schools will have signed up to New Opportunities Fund (NOF) training by 2003, but again there has been slow progress in secondary schools. Co-ordinators in primary schools are supported through additional training programmes, such as the five-day course on the management of ICT, which has been very successful and well received by schools. EiC funding has aided development of subject expertise in secondary schools and the city learning centre, now established,

but not yet operational because of delays, is likely to improve training facilities further.

66. Arrangements for technical support to primary schools are unclear and a number of schools are dissatisfied with the level of response to queries, lack of robust e-mail systems and the constant delays in progress because of unresolved corporate leadership in this area. There is currently no programme in place to link administration and curriculum systems for teachers' use.

Support for raising standards at Key Stage 3

67. The implementation of the Key Stage 3 strategy is satisfactory. This area was not covered in the first inspection. Overall pupils' attainment is below national averages. However, rates of improvement are in line with those nationally. The LEA has rightly established challenging targets for 2003 and 2004 in all three core subjects. Exclusion rates are high and attendance well below the national average, although there was a small improvement in Year 9 attendance in autumn 2001.

68. Progress has been hindered by considerable difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff in the Key Stage 3 team. This has been partly overcome by the LEA's interim staffing arrangements and through the consistently good support for the strategy from external consultants, with whom the LEA has a strong working partnership. Officers recognise the weaknesses in the implementation of the strategy and intend to reposition the service following a current Best Value review.

69. In the absence of a Key Stage 3 strategy manager the team has had sound leadership through the language, achievement and basic skills service (LABS). Good joint training for schools with the ethnic minority achievement team is in place and regular guidance and monitoring of the work of the small Key Stage 3 team has taken place. The LEA is very clear about secondary schools' needs. It uses performance data effectively to target its support to five schools and to groups of under-performing pupils accurately. This is particularly evident in the robust challenge given to heads of subject in their use of data for target setting.

70. Effective training and support for heads of English are beginning to improve the quality of teaching. Despite a change of staff mid-year, training and support for mathematics have been sustained, recent provision has been good and the lost time has been made up successfully. However, some schools are finding difficulty in implementing the changes required in the teaching of mathematics. For both subjects the LEA is supporting teachers' network groups and providing effective joint training for Key Stages 2 and 3 colleagues. Unsatisfactory areas of the LEA's work are the training and support for science, and the under-development of cross-curricular numeracy.

Review of secondary education

71. Although not a priority in EDP2, the current review of the provision for secondary education is a key area of the council's school improvement strategy. It is wholly focused on better access to a high quality education for all pupils. Two years ago, five of the eight secondary schools were causing serious concern to the LEA

and, although there has been improvement in these schools, standards overall are below national averages.

72. The action plan following the OFSTED 16-19 area wide inspection identifies a clear vision and direction for the partnerships involved. The LEA's secondary strategy reflects that vision, but does not deal fully with the wide range of expectations held by the community. The curriculum purposes of greater choice and entitlement, improved opportunities for specialisation, engagement in the world of enterprise and the development of civic responsibility are however, laudable and challenging. The review is currently at the early stage of discussion of illustrative models for change and their broader implications. With a big agenda of project feasibility studies, planning and phasing to be addressed, the time scales for the published 2004 introduction of the structural changes is challenging.

Support for ethnic minority groups including Travellers

73. The inspection in May 2000 judged as satisfactory the LEA's support to schools in raising standards of achievement of ethnic minorities and Traveller children. That support was not inspected in detail, but evidence available confirmed the LEA's own view that it is still satisfactory.

74. As a priority, the LEA now identifies different groups of ethnic minority pupils and their achievements from recently improved performance data and successfully targets different groups of pupils with additional support. The Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant team have worked with the literacy group. Recent school inspection reports indicate some improved performance of pupils from ethnic minority groups, although their performance remains variable. Over half of the identified groups of ethnic minorities pupils achieve results which are above the national average and in line with the average for similar authorities in Key Stage 2 tests in English and mathematics. In the school survey this area was judged as satisfactory in both phases of schools.

Support for gifted and talented pupils

75. The provision for gifted and talented pupils is satisfactory with few areas of major weakness. This area was not considered in the first inspection. The LEA strategy is developing well in partnership with the EAZ, the EiC initiative and other agencies. There is a clear understanding of the distinction between, and the needs of, gifted and talented pupils, but there is no policy or guidance to support it, although secondary school improvement consultants incorporate gifted and talented issues into their work with schools. Appropriate targets are set for higher level attainment. At Key Stage 2 the percentage of pupils attaining Level 5 is rising and in 2001 was above the national average.

76. Several years' experience of targeted work for able pupils has effectively informed the LEA's identification of needs and the audit by schools. The provision for pupils of summer schools, master classes and opportunities in higher education settings is well established. A range of programmes for the arts and sport are provided to help develop and enhance pupils' broader talents. Funded, at least in part, by other partner agencies, they are well targeted on the most disadvantaged

areas of the city. Evidence from EAZ primary schools suggests that the resulting enhanced curriculum is improving children's work in other curriculum subjects. The LEA has suitable strategies to support schools that struggle to achieve in this area, but the management of the dissemination of good practice, though in principle good and extensive, is underdeveloped in practice.

Support for school management

77. The support for school management is satisfactory with few areas of major weakness. This is a significant improvement on the findings of the first inspection and reflects a growing and mutual confidence between LEA officers and schools.

78. Detailed monitoring enables the LEA to identify the strengths and weaknesses in school leadership and management. Senior officers are clear about the key indicators and generally the LEA knows its schools well. As a result the school effectiveness group identifies good and poor management practice and successfully uses the former to second effective practitioners into schools with difficulties or into medium term vacancies in the LEA.

79. The successful training and support for school self evaluation have been suitably targeted on senior staff of secondary departments. Leadership and management have improved in more than a third of schools in the last two years. Headteacher conferences are jointly planned, between the schools and the LEA, to offer both strategic and operational support. The LEA encourages attendance on the national training course for experienced headteachers and all deputies follow the programme for aspiring headteachers. Networks of primary and secondary deputy heads play a key role in management and curriculum development in the LEA. The LEA uses a wide range of processes to disseminate good practice but it requires a coherent framework to make it accessible to all schools.

Recommendation

In order to ensure more effective dissemination of good practice:

- define a clear strategy and clarify this with schools; and extend the means used, particularly via the Intranet.

80. In 2001/2 a comprehensive training programme, welcomed by professional associations, has been offered for staff, senior managers and governors, the first for many years. The take up of courses has been generally good and the evaluations very positive. Using the Teacher Training Agency's five stages of school leadership, the LEA has begun to identify the range of its training and support for school management. The provision is satisfactory, but with limited depth or range. Senior officers recognise the need to broker and establish partnerships to enhance the training opportunities. The LEA gives sound advice to schools on buying services for curriculum support. However, no guidance is given on how schools might apply the processes of best value in evaluating their own services to the community.

Support for governors

81. The inspection in 2000 judged support to governing bodies to be satisfactory with few areas of major weakness. Although no detailed inspection work was carried out, evidence suggests that there has been some further improvement. The LEA recognises that governor recruitment continues to be a problem. Limited progress has been made in electing governors to represent ethnic minorities. There is now greater involvement of school governors in target setting.

The effectiveness of services to support school management

82. Services to support school management are unsatisfactory. The judgement of the previous inspection was that services were poor, with significant weaknesses. At present the quality and range of support are mixed. Two areas are satisfactory or good, three significant areas are unsatisfactory and two areas, cleaning and caretaking and grounds maintenance, were not inspected.

83. The LEA has made satisfactory progress in the past year in attempting to develop its role as a broker of services responsive to individual school needs. It has established services to schools board, which all schools have supported. This will secure services appropriate to schools' needs, enabling them to make informed choices and monitor performance. Information about traded services is made available with indicative budgets to schools in the November of the preceding financial year. The LEA is now well placed to facilitate co-ordination of procurement and to work with schools constructively. However, it is too early to judge its effectiveness, and the next year will be crucial in this respect.

Recommendation

In order to improve services to support school management:

- ensure that the services to schools board has clearly defined aims and objectives that focus on co-ordinating independent advice on the procurement of services to meet schools' needs, sets out responsibilities clearly and assists performance monitoring.

84. **Financial services** to schools remain unsatisfactory, as they were at the time of the last inspection, although the LEA's self-assessment is that they are satisfactory. The tracking of schools' deficit budgets has improved since the previous inspection, but the LEA's overall support in financial matters is very limited. It is confined principally to the provision of financial information and standard guidance on budget setting. No service is available to schools to respond to individual needs, and the initiative is left with headteachers to be proactive in seeking further advice and guidance wherever they can. The council has no mechanism to assist schools in their individual budget management and development, nor does it assist schools in the procurement of financial services.

85. The unreliability of the council's payroll system is a source of much concern to schools. Unnecessary effort is expended currently on rectifying errors, thus diverting

schools from their core work and restricting the LEA's capacity to give more attention to their wider needs.

Recommendation

In order to improve financial management support for schools:

- work through the services to schools board to ascertain the level and nature of financial services required by schools and their procurement; and
- rectify errors in the payroll system.

86. **Personnel services** are satisfactory, with few areas of major weakness; this was the judgement of the previous inspection and is in accord with the LEA's own assessment. Schools value highly the support they receive.

87. **Property services** to schools have not improved since the last inspection and remain unsatisfactory. This concurs with the LEA's own assessment. Progress has been too slow and the change in arrangements has only recently had any impact. The function is delivered through a four-year external contract, which started in April 2001 and has resulted in few improvements. From the start, there were problems and delays in implementing the summer works programme. These problems took longer to resolve than anticipated. Building works were not completed on time, resulting in the delayed opening of four schools at the beginning of the autumn term 2001.

88. Schools are appropriately offered a differentiated service. However, although the majority have bought back at least some aspects of this for 2002/03, they have expressed doubts about quality and value for money. The council has taken steps to attempt to address many of the concerns raised; monitoring arrangements and action plans have been put in place, but it is too early to judge their effectiveness.

89. Schools remain unclear about the division of responsibilities on property issues. The LEA accepts that more needs to be done to communicate with schools and support them on the co-ordination of funding bids, developing coherent links between school plans and the authority's asset management plans, and ensuring transparency in decision-taking on funding priorities.

Recommendations

In order to improve property services:

- develop appropriate guidance for schools so that they are clear where their responsibilities lie;
- support schools in the co-ordination of funding bids, developing coherent links between school plans and the authority's asset management plans; and
- ensure transparency in decision-taking on funding priorities.

90. **Services for ICT in school administration** continue to be unsatisfactory. This judgement matches the LEA's own assessment. This is an area that has suffered considerably from staff turnover, with consequent gaps in service delivery and continuity. Interim short-term arrangements have been made, through an external contract to supplement in house resources, but support to schools has been limited. Future arrangements are under review.

91. Electronic communication between schools and the LEA is weak and there is no intranet for schools. Access to e-mail is recent and underused. Support and planning for curriculum and administrative ICT are not linked. There is no overarching strategy to deliver effective support for ICT in schools administration.

Recommendations

In order to raise pupils' standards in ICT, improve the information available to teachers and give support for administration in school:

- develop a corporate, well co-ordinated and acceptable strategy;
- provide effective support to schools, including technical help for those schools that need it;
- develop an Intranet for schools which successfully links curriculum and administration needs; and
- provide a robust and consistent e-mail system which improves communication between schools and the LEA.

92. The school **catering** service is good and has improved. The majority of schools buy back into a centrally arranged contract which is responsive to schools and community needs. Good advice is readily available on nutrition and quality assurance in all areas is tight.

93. A Best Value review has been conducted on the catering service. The review was robust and included extensive consultation with all stakeholders. It found that the service is well received by pupils, headteachers and parents, and compares extremely well with other LEAs in terms of take-up, meal prices and methods of delivery. The conclusion was that the service is valued, of good quality and delivered at an affordable cost. Clear action plans, targets and regular monitoring have already led to further improvements. The service is well placed to continue this progress through the effective practices now developed.

The LEA's work in assuring the supply and quality of teachers

94. The work of the LEA in assuring the supply and quality of teachers is satisfactory with few areas of major weakness though there remain significant difficulties in filling posts and retaining staff. This issue was not covered in the first inspection

95. Despite the absence of a written policy, the recently introduced strategies and actions are likely to lead to improvement. The recruitment strategy manager uses a detailed action plan that includes annual staffing targets up to 2005. Each term, the plan is monitored and revised accordingly. It covers a well-targeted set of actions that include staff induction and training; initiatives for assistance with housing and transport; exit surveys of staff; a comprehensive staff data profile and an all important focus on recognising teachers' successes as a key strategy for the future. Members are kept informed of developments and from 2002/03 have agreed a modest retention allowance for staff with three years service.

96. In summer 2001 the predicted autumn shortfall of teaching staff was reduced significantly through schools taking successful initiatives in this area. The LEA supports schools which have the greatest difficulties in recruitment and the recruitment campaign for autumn 2002 began in April.

97. Newly qualified teachers are well supported through a one-year development programme provided by schools, the LEA and higher education. The LEA provides mentor training for secondary schools and officers effectively carry out monitoring of the induction of new staff in all schools. New headteachers have only an informal induction programme through their school development officer or associate consultant and they receive mentor support in the first year. By September 2002 all headteachers will also have a business mentor.

98. The professional training programme for staff is a good development that appropriately draws on a range of providers. However, its scope and recognition are currently limited because it does not have a model of career progression in Westminster schools that is supported by headteachers and the LEA.

Recommendation

In order to promote the value of training in the LEA:

- develop a well-marketed programme that offers all staff a continuum of professional development using a wide range of providers and expertise.

The effectiveness of services to support school improvement

99. Services to support school improvement are satisfactory with a few persistent weaknesses. This is an improvement since the last inspection when they were unsatisfactory. There are some clear strengths and prospects for continued improvement.

100. Leadership to support school improvement was judged satisfactory in the first inspection. It continues to be satisfactory. Strategic planning has improved and has become increasingly focused on performance-related outcomes. The first EDP1 was rewritten and improved after the first inspection to make it more fully reflect corporate and other service plans. EDP2 and other service plans are now generally coherent and reflect priorities. However, current business and service plans lack sufficient measurable objectives that consistently address both school improvement and inclusion issues.

Recommendation

In order to improve the focus on school improvement in all service units:

- ensure all service plans include specific measurable outcomes related to EDP2.

101. The LEA is improving its relationships with schools through more frequent consultation on the development of plans and services. The recently introduced school improvement board brings together managers across the education department and the corporate body. It ensures the integration of national initiatives, such as EiC and the EAZ, but it does not fully integrate all those services which support management.

102. Performance management, including the induction of new entrants to the education department, has also improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory, although lacking consistency. The authority's performance appraisal framework involves six-monthly review with annual assessment, linked to performance related pay. At its best it provides a means of analysing performance, reviewing targets and agreeing future objectives. Not all service units, however, have set targets which are sufficiently measurable and focused on outcomes. There has been a recent external review of arrangements for staff recruitment, retention and performance management and the authority has made a major financial commitment to improvement.

103. The inspection in 2000 judged both the standard of expertise and the effectiveness of services supporting school improvement to be broadly satisfactory. No detailed work was done in this area, but progress in raising standards, together with other evidence, suggests that it is still satisfactory. Schools' views indicate that there are more strengths than weaknesses, especially in the secondary phase, where support by Nord Anglia, the contracted provider, is rated as good.

104. Westminster spends significantly more on school improvement than similar authorities and all authorities nationally. However, faced with major challenges, its rate of improvement in some critical areas of performance has been high. The value for money is satisfactory overall. In particular the school effectiveness service has had a clear impact on supporting schools causing concern and in raising standards.

SECTION 3: SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Summary of effectiveness of LEA's Special Educational Needs provision

105. Provision for SEN is unsatisfactory and the LEA demonstrates only limited capacity to improve further. The previous inspection report judged that provision for pupils with SEN was sound and performing well. It recommended that the LEA should devise a clear method for allocating funding to schools for pupils with SEN, develop effective means of evaluating support to pupils and that the restructured inclusive education service should be effectively co-ordinated as part of the wider work of supporting school improvement. The LEA has made only limited progress against these recommendations. While the vision and principles for more inclusive schools have been set out clearly, there is no coherent strategy, and the budget for SEN has been significantly exceeded

The LEA's strategy for Special Educational Needs (SEN)

106. The strategy for SEN is poor. There is no plan that shows the steps the LEA intends to take, or the time scale within which actions will be taken. However, the LEA has recently taken suitable steps to consult schools on the policy for inclusion with schools, parents, other departments of the council and voluntary agencies. Schools have broadly welcomed the policy, which sets out the principles for more inclusive provision for pupils with a wide range of SEN. However, the LEA has not provided any details, based on an audit of current needs, provision and the implications of policy implementation. There are no specific targets, no clear assessment of the impact of the strategy on pupils' achievement and no financial modelling of the resources required either in mainstream or special schools.

107. The LEA places a significant number of pupils with statements of SEN in expensive out of borough placements. This has contributed to high levels of spending on placements and transport. There is no detailed plan for how more local provision will be developed for some of these pupils in the future, and no assessment of the impact this will have on special schools. The LEA does not have robust criteria for identification of pupils who have special educational needs but are without a statement. Draft criteria have recently been produced and a system for moderation is planned for the next academic year. The LEA cannot at present be sure that schools' identification of special needs is sound or consistent across the authority, and this makes strategic planning difficult.

108. Since the last inspection, the LEA has delegated money to mainstream schools for SEN. While this gives greater flexibility, schools do not see the criteria for delegation as fair or transparent. The result of this lack of coherent planning has led to uncertainty in schools. Elected members are aware of the consultation on the strategy for inclusion. However, they have had little guidance and data to inform them of decisions they need to make to support a more inclusive strategy.

Statutory obligations

109. The LEA continues to meet its statutory obligations satisfactorily with few areas of major weakness. All statutory assessments are completed within the 18-

week deadline, when exceptions are taken into account. Without exceptions, the total falls to around 40 per cent. There has been no focused dialogue with partner agencies, for example social services and health, to set targets for improvement. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is broadly in line with statistical neighbours but higher than the national average. The LEA places a far greater proportion of children with statements of special educational need in special school provision than its statistical neighbours or authorities nationally.

110. The move towards more inclusive schools has been slower in Westminster than in other inner London boroughs. There are, however, indications that requests for statutory assessment are beginning to slow down. The post of parent partnership officer is currently vacant, but trained independent parent supporters are in place. The LEA manages to maintain a satisfactory level of support to parents; officers are aware of the need to provide information and leaflets for parents in a range of minority ethnic languages.

School improvement

111. The organisation of special needs to support school improvement is satisfactory. Criteria for statutory assessment are being updated to bring them in line with the revised code of practice for SEN. Westminster is working in partnership with other London boroughs to develop a joint framework which can be adapted locally. While this is useful, the draft is expected to be ready for consultation only by September 2002. The LEA is only now completing an audit of the accessibility of schools to pupils with physical disabilities and does not have a strategy, shared with schools, for increasing access across all schools. .

112. The inclusive education service (IES) was established in 1999. Specialist teachers for hearing impaired or visually impaired children work effectively with learning and behaviour support teachers to support clusters of schools. Education psychologists and education welfare officers augment each of the three cluster teams. Evaluation of school-based projects demonstrates that the service is having a positive impact on pupil attainment.

113. Funds devolved to schools for the non-statutory parts of the service have been used to buy back services from the authority. The LEA is not, however, providing the full range of services needed and special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCO) were critical of variation in the quality of provision. The LEA has produced a useful school self-review handbook and provides a range of helpful training opportunities through the use of an external provider.

114. The LEA has a good strategy for monitoring the progress of pupils with SEN at the end of each key stage, at transition and where concerns have been raised about individual pupils. While all annual review outcomes are scrutinised, there is no overall analysis that would allow LEA managers to identify areas of strength or weakness. The use of 'p'² scales for assessment is not established in mainstream school practice. A valuable opportunity to identify and celebrate very small levels of progression for pupils with complex special educational needs is therefore being lost.

² 'p'scales refers to pre and interim levels of attainment.

Links between members of the SEN team, the school effectiveness team and the consultants are strong and the mechanisms for passing on evidence of concern or good practice are robust.

Value for money

115. Value for money is unsatisfactory. The LEA does not monitor funds delegated to schools to meet pupils' needs and therefore it is unable to assess the impact of this funding. The centrally held revenue budget for SEN has reduced since the last inspection and the proportion retained is now lower than is the case in statistical neighbours, but higher than the national average. Procedures for controlling the central budget have been poor, and a very significant proportion of the overspend in the overall education budget last financial year was due to spending on SEN.

116. The SEN handbook provides satisfactory information about the respective roles and responsibilities of the LEA and schools. Systems are in place for monitoring the effectiveness of SEN services, but too many of the success criteria are process based. Overall the LEA is unable to demonstrate the impact of its services on pupils' attainment.

117. A best value review of SEN assessment and purchasing was carried out in 2000/2001. The review was limited in terms of benchmarking data available from other LEAs and there was a poor response to the consultation by users. While the number of statements had risen by 56 per cent over the previous six years, the number of requests for assessment was beginning to fall. The review identified areas for improvement, and these have been included in an action plan. Success criteria for measuring progress apply very much to the process used rather than impact. It is therefore unclear how far the actions identified will lead to significant service improvement.

Recommendations

In order to improve support for SEN:

- draw up with schools a clear plan of action that sets out the way in which the LEA will move towards developing more inclusive provision. Clarify :
 - the amount and type of future specialist provision to be developed in special and mainstream schools;
 - the role of special schools in supporting inclusion and developing as centres of excellence; and
 - the time frame and resource implications for action
- urgently finalise the criteria for identification of pupils with SEN in mainstream schools;
- provide mainstream schools with financial models of the intended banding system for allocating SEN resources;
- ensure delegation accurately reflects needs moderated against agreed criteria.
- monitor the use of delegated funds to ensure value for money;
- work with partner agencies to reduce the number of statutory assessments which exceed the 18 week exceptions limit;
- improve communication with parents/carers through ensuring information is available in minority ethnic languages; and
- set success criteria in service development plans which ensure they more accurately reflect the impact of the LEA's actions on pupil attainment;

SECTION 4: PROMOTING SOCIAL INCLUSION

Summary of effectiveness in promoting social inclusion

118. The LEA's overall support for social inclusion is now satisfactory and there is capacity for further improvement. The LEA has made good progress since promoting social inclusion was judged unsatisfactory in the last inspection. There is now a shared understanding of social inclusion across the council. Recommendations of the previous report have been addressed and, with the exception of the planning of school places and provision for pupils who have no school place, most aspects are satisfactory.

The strategy to promote social inclusion

119. The vision and priorities for addressing social disadvantage are set out in the Westminster City plan and neighbourhood renewal strategy. Prominent priority is given to education in key corporate plans and policies on social regeneration. The departments of the council know how their work, in liaison with education, is intended to contribute to that priority.

120. Through regular monitoring the LEA has identified and focused support on improving the attainment of vulnerable pupils and removing the barriers to learning. There have been rapid improvements in the GCSE results of Bangladeshi pupils and for young people in public care. Numbers of children excluded from school have fallen and there has been some improvement in attendance, particularly in primary schools. Such improvement is not yet evident for all vulnerable groups, and targets remain challenging. The LEA actively seeks to obtain additional funding for initiatives to support social inclusion, for example homework clubs. It has been successful in bids to the children's fund and the single regeneration budget (SRB).

121. It is not clear how social inclusion is to be promoted through the wider school improvement strategy. Strategic planning with partners has not led quickly enough to operational change. The LEA works effectively with social services, health providers and the police and there are good examples of co-operation, for example on truancy sweeps. Communication with and involvement of community groups has not been effective, as they feel their views have not been fully sought.

Recommendations

In order to promote social inclusion:

- bring together the strands found in different LEA plans and make more explicit the deadlines for action; and
- improve communication and involvement of community groups to support key LEA aims.

The supply of school places

122. The LEA's planning of school places is unsatisfactory, as it was at the time of the last inspection. The previous inspection highlighted the rapidly emerging shortage of secondary school places, with significant overcrowding in half of the secondary schools. The structure of secondary provision was increasingly incompatible with the religious and ethnic diversity of the local population, particularly in the north of the council's area. The LEA's assessment is that the planning of school places is now satisfactory.

123. The school organisation plan rightly indicates that schools are overcrowded and that there continues to be pressure on reception class places. Secondary demand for places exceeds capacity and overall the child population is expected to become more ethnically diverse. The plan fails to draw any clear conclusions from data presented and gives little indication of the key areas for action. The plan makes no explicit links with other LEA plans, such as the strategy to increase the proportion of Westminster pupils with SEN who are placed in mainstream schools. No reference is made to the impact the LEA's 14-19 strategy is likely to have on the number of school places required in the sixth forms, although one of the aims of that strategy is to raise post 16 participation. The LEA accepts that whilst pupil projections are accurate at phase level, they are less accurate at area or year group level. They are not sensitive to patterns of local demand, or a highly mobile population, as shown by the unanticipated need for an additional 131 reception class places in 2001/02. The LEA does not obtain information from other agencies such as health, housing and planning to assist this.

124. In a complex situation where the majority of secondary schools have aided status and there is an imbalance of single sex places, progress on secondary reorganisation has been slower and more limited than the LEA anticipated in its original timetable. The previous inspection recommended an approach to the supply of school places which set out to increase the proportion of Westminster residents in LEA schools, and to address the diversity of the population. An ambitious review of secondary provision commenced early in 2001. Efforts have concentrated on building a consensus across the secondary sector and on developing a new vision and framework for secondary education in the area. This review is a key aspect of the council's school improvement strategy, as it is focused on better access to high quality education for all pupils. A number of models for future delivery have recently been developed for consultation in summer 2002, but without definite proposals for individual schools, or proposals to address the issue of Westminster's diverse population. The LEA anticipates publication of any associated statutory notices in summer 2003, at the earliest. It cannot afford to let the deadlines slip further.

125. Senior officers and elected members have developed a suitable strategy for the initial discussions with schools and partners. They do not underestimate the scope of the review's implications and the essential need to address fully the many issues arising from the religious and cultural diversity of the community. However, there is a determination to proceed in a measured and pragmatic way, while ensuring that the educational principles that are driving the need for change are maintained.

Recommendations

In order to improve the supply of school places, as part of the school organisation plan:

- make clear in the plan how the demand for future places will be met;
- make explicit links in the school organisation plan to other LEA plans;
- ensure that future options for increasing the number of school places take account of the diversity of the community;
- improve links with other agencies such as housing, planning and health to inform pupil projected numbers; and
- take steps to ensure that the new vision and framework for secondary education is implemented by September 2004.

Asset management

126. The asset management planning process is satisfactory and has improved since the last inspection. The council's own assessment is that this area has improved. Schools are well involved through a steering group, managed by the LEA, which includes diocesan authorities. This acts as a consultative forum to determine the principles and processes for arriving at a fair and transparent assessment of schools' needs, linked to clear educational outcomes. There is a clear financial strategy to address condition work. There is scope for further clarity and discussion, both within the steering group and with individual schools, to develop their understanding of the process in full.

Admissions

127. The LEA's admission arrangements are satisfactory. This is in line with the LEA's own assessment and the findings of the last inspection. This inspection has therefore only looked at this function to the extent that it impacts on the LEA's planning for school places. The LEA is beginning to take a pro-active role in co-ordinating admissions, which will enable detailed knowledge of pupil movement to be assembled year on year, thus developing the authority's capacity for strategic management of school places.

128. As part of its review of secondary provision the LEA has introduced an additional criterion for admissions to its three community secondary schools, to take effect from September 2003. The change is intended to improve access and opportunities for local primary pupils to transfer to secondary schools in Westminster. The LEA has also taken the initiative in encouraging governing bodies of the five aided secondary schools to explore the possibility of similar changes being introduced in these schools. This has resulted in some success to date. As the changes will not take effect until September 2003 admissions, it is too early to judge their effectiveness.

Provision of education for pupils who have no school place

129. Provision for pupils educated otherwise than at school (EOTAS) is unsatisfactory. Provision was judged in the last inspection to be good, providing good value for money. There were no recommendations for improvement. The LEA continues to make good provision for pupils at Key Stage 4 who have no school place. However, it has not met the requirements to register 'interim provision' for Key Stage 3 pupils either on the roll of a pupil referral unit (PRU) or a school.

130. The LEA's systems for referral of excluded pupils are effective and well understood by schools. Working closely with schools and other agencies, it has been successful in meeting its targets for reducing the number of pupils permanently excluded from school. Pupils at Key Stage 4 receive full time provision. Attendance, attainment and progression post-14, are closely monitored and results are very good. Seventy five per cent of pupils show improved attendance and 90 per cent go on to further education post-16. Young people and their parents/ carers are very positive about the range of opportunities available. Full time provision (25 hours) is in place for all pupils at Key Stage 4, well in advance of the statutory requirement that comes into force in September 2002.

131. The 'interim provision' provided for eleven pupils, at Key Stage 3, is not registered as a pupil referral unit and as such is not subject to any monitoring external to the LEA. This is a serious cause for concern, although the LEA has plans for registering the provision as a PRU. These plans are at a very early stage in terms of demonstrating that the curriculum entitlement of pupils can be provided and that suitable accommodation and resources are available. The LEA is failing in its duty to make the provision set out in the statements of those pupils with special educational needs who attend this provision.

132. The LEA has put into place effective procedures to monitor the education of children whose parents have chosen to educate them at home. Parents are provided with helpful guidance and there is a growing trend for home education where parents do not feel local schools provide for their cultural or religious needs. There is no systematic procedure in place for feeding such information into the school organisation committee.

133. A Best Value review on the education of sick children at home or in hospital was conducted in 2000. Seventy five per cent of pupils who come into the remit of the hospital service are from outside Westminster. This was the first review of this aspect of education nationally. The review was limited by lack of data from comparable services and consultation with schools although it is clear parents and pupils value the service. Actions for further improvement were identified.

134. The teenage pregnancy rate in Westminster is low compared to other London boroughs. Nevertheless the LEA is aware of 'pockets' of particularly vulnerable pupils and with health and social services is taking satisfactory steps to provide advice and support. Special provision is made for schoolgirl mothers. This focuses on enabling them to continue their education. There is effective networking between officers and other agencies to ensure that no pupils become lost to education. A

multi-agency panel for the placement of pupils tracks them both within and across local authority boundaries.

Recommendation

In order to improve the provision for pupils who have no school place:

- urgently comply with the statutory requirement to place pupils not educated in mainstream or special schools on the role of a DFES registered pupil referral unit.

Attendance

135. The support for attendance is satisfactory. The previous inspection report judged it as unsatisfactory. The LEA has made progress in addressing recommendations from the last report, although the programme for change is not yet fully embedded. The LEA strategy is sound and has been clearly communicated to schools. It gives good guidance for developing whole school policies and procedures. The capacity for improvement is good; all schools now have a policy and have set targets for improving attendance and reducing unauthorised absence.

136. Attendance in primary schools improved in 2000/2001 with 67 per cent of schools reducing unauthorised absence. However, attendance at five out of eight secondary schools fell over the same period. Although unauthorised absence overall in the secondary phase improved by 0.6 per cent, it remains at more than double the national average and well above similar authorities. Figures for the autumn term 2001 show significant improvements in primary and secondary schools. The LEA will meet its 2002 target for primary schools if this progress is sustained, but it is unlikely that the target set for secondary schools will be reached.

137. There has been insufficient investigation into the reasons why pupils do not attend schools. For example, no research has been conducted into the links between non-attendance and bullying and lack of curriculum differentiation. Holidays taken in term time, often for cultural or religious reasons, are contributing to low levels of attendance in the city. A recent conference to initiate dialogue with parents of children from ethnic minority groups and voluntary organisations was poorly attended because few parents were aware of it.

138. Following re-structuring, the education welfare service now provides a more coherent framework to support improvement. There is effective co-ordination between the service and learning mentors in secondary schools, funded through EiC, and support to primary schools is part of the inclusive education service. Schools are clear about their allocation of time and specific projects are targeted on schools with the greatest need. Further support has been purchased from a home to school liaison project and here there has been a faster rate of improvement, although this good practice has not been systematically shared.

139. There are strong multi-agency links with the police, neighbourhood wardens, social services and housing. Regular truancy patrols are carried out and there is good evidence that the attendance of young people at school improves as a

consequence. The police are keen to extend this work but the LEA has insufficient staff time available for this. Effective targeted use is made of prosecution.

140. A Best Value review of attendance was completed in 2001 and made good use of comparable data from other LEAs. Feedback through consultation with parents and pupils was limited and the cost of the service is higher than for similar authorities. The review has given greater clarity about the areas for improvement and the monitoring required. The resultant action plan is sound.

Recommendations

In order to improve support for attendance:

- monitor attendance by ethnicity so that secure data is available that can be used to establish improved dialogue with parents/carers from ethnic minority communities;
- investigate the links between poor attendance, bullying and lack of curriculum differentiation; and
- work with the police to establish a regular programme of truancy patrols.

Behaviour support

141. LEA support for behaviour is now satisfactory with few areas of major weaknesses and the LEA has the capacity to improve further. It was graded as unsatisfactory in the last inspection. The authority was recommended to review the behaviour support plan (BSP) and work more closely with high excluding schools, ensuring a more effective strategic co-ordination of the total provision.

142. The rate of permanent exclusion has decreased. The LEA is on track to meet the targets set out in the BSP. In primary schools, the rate of permanent exclusion is now lower than for similar authorities and nationally. The rate in secondary schools has reduced significantly but is still more than double that of similar authorities and nationally. Through effective targeting, the LEA has achieved a drop in the previously disproportionate exclusions of black Caribbean boys. The total number of days lost to fixed term exclusions is beginning to fall.

143. The BSP has been comprehensively revised. Targets for reducing exclusion are challenging but achievable. Success criteria for other aspects of the LEA's work in supporting behaviour are however, insufficiently precise. The plan provides good information, including training available to schools and high quality guidance. There is good evidence of multi-agency planning particularly in relation to children in public care.

144. Schools receive comprehensive data on exclusions. This aids them in focusing attention and resources on greatest need. The sharing of good practice is not systematic. The authority has not yet addressed the inconsistencies between schools in the reasons for which pupils are excluded for a fixed term.

145. The management and deployment of LEA behaviour support teachers are now within the inclusive education service (IES). Staff work in one of three teams to support inclusive practice in a cluster of primary schools. Support to secondary schools is provided through Nord Anglia consultants. At both phases, work with schools is moving gradually to a more strategic level rather than with individual pupils. Schools value project work, which is thoroughly planned, monitored and evaluated. The LEA monitors the use of the pupil retention grant (PRG) and has sound links to EiC and EAZ initiatives. It operates a 'dowry' system to provide additional finance to schools that accept a permanently excluded pupil in order to promote the re-integration of pupils. However, the shortage of secondary school places often prevents re-integration at Key Stage 3.

146. Good links have been established with the child and adolescent mental health service. The LEA purchases a comprehensive assessment and intervention service staffed by teachers who are also family therapists from a highly rated local unit. The unit also provides outreach support for two schools a term on a rotational basis. This provides excellent value for money. Support for behaviour is not well co-ordinated at a strategic level within the overall SEN strategy. Delegated funding and centrally held support for behaviour are targeted appropriately and costs are broadly planned and monitored. The LEA is providing sound value for money.

Recommendation

In order to improve support for behaviour:

- work with schools to ensure that the 'tariff' for poor behaviour resulting in fixed term exclusion is similar across schools.

Health, safety, welfare and child protection

147. The LEA continues to provide a good service in support of child protection and has the capacity to improve further. The previous inspection report showed that provision in this area was good and as a result no detailed work was carried out on the LEA's arrangements for health and safety during the course of this inspection. The arrangements for child protection were reviewed more thoroughly.

148. Training and guidance on best practice in child protection are provided regularly for designated teachers in each school and the take up of training is carefully monitored. The child protection procedure handbook for schools is thorough. The area child protection committee, which includes the LEA manager for special education and additional needs as the designated officer, takes the initiative in promoting better interagency working by practical means, such as common data and communication systems. The health service, youth offending team and the police make effective contributions to health, personal and social education.

149. The LEA has good working relationships with social services, and at a strategic level these are very effective. In practice, most schools represented at focus groups reported effective liaison with social services in urgent situations, although this is sometimes adversely affected by staff turnover and recruitment difficulties.

Children in public care

150. The support for children in public care is good. Plans define a clear and coherent interdisciplinary strategy to promote further improvement. The previous inspection report judged it as unsatisfactory. Information systems to monitor educational attainment were not secure and the strategy for improvement needed further development. The report recommended that a secure database should be established. Excellent progress has been made.

151. The council has actively taken corporate responsibility to promote the educational achievement, as well as pastoral support, of children in its care. Regular reports are made to members, and future targets are set on attainment, attendance and rates of exclusion. Last year, 90 per cent of Year 11 young people in public care went on to further education, training or employment. Secure and relevant data is shared between education and social services; a full analysis of attainment is made at the end of each key stage and challenging targets are set. The successes of young people in public care are celebrated annually in an event supported by a wide range of local authority departments and councillors. This is one of a number of initiatives to improve attainment and attendance that have a beneficial impact.

152. The majority of children in public care are placed outside the borough. The LEA works effectively on cross boundary liaison to ensure their education is thoroughly planned and monitored. An education worker supports children in residential units. Significant proportions of the children in public care are unaccompanied asylum seekers. The Quality Protects management plan appropriately sets out the intention to provide the further bilingual assistant and educational psychology support needed by these children.

153. The LEA and social services have provided training to designated staff in schools and social workers so that they can better support educational attainment. Foster carers have been provided with a useful booklet that deals with understanding education, social services and health department systems and procedures. Training for school governors has been identified as a priority for 2002. Personal education plans are in place for all young people in public care and there is suitable emphasis on young people contributing to and 'owning' the plans. Financial management by the education and social services departments is good and the borough provides good value for money in fulfilling its responsibilities for children in public care.

Measures to combat racism

154. The LEA is now effective in combating racism and the department has the capacity to improve further. This aspect of the LEA's work was judged unsatisfactory in the previous report. There were no policy or procedures for dealing with or reporting on racial harassment or racist incidents in schools. The recommendations required the LEA to respond to the enquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence as a matter of urgency. There has been a positive response. There is now a corporate race equality framework and the council has met the Commission for Racial Equality level 1 requirements.

155. The LEA has issued detailed guidance on action to combat racism. There has been a comprehensive audit of practice in the education department and schools. The education department and each school have a policy and action plan in place. The LEA response to the enquiry was included as a priority in the revised EDP1. A wide range of training has been delivered and there is a named person to promote race equality in every school. A system for recording racist incidents has been put in place recently. This was overdue and has yet to be fully implemented. Training for school staff on dealing with racist incidents is planned for the summer term 2002.

156. A race equality policy officer with a focus on corporate working has been appointed within the education department. Corporate commitment is also demonstrated through the chief officer diversity working group, which ensures coherent strategic development across the local authority.

157. An audit of black and ethnic minority groups in Westminster has been commissioned through London University as part of the 'Civic Renewal' programme. Its findings will inform future action planning. While it has been widely welcomed, such an analysis is overdue.

158. The LEA has taken positive action to develop the curriculum to take account of cultural and faith groups for example 'Celebrating the Black presence in Westminster 1500-2000'. A recent 'Faith Forum' has indicated strong support to develop this further. SRB funds a range of activities and classes to support the parents of ethnic minority pupils and asylum seekers as well as homework clubs and other out of school activities for young people. A small number of projects in schools promote wider cultural diversity. Links between the education department, housing, social services and the police are improving.

Recommendations

In order to support measures already in place to combat racism:

- draw up an action plan showing how the LEA will work with the black and ethnic minority communities in order to develop their capacity and increase their participation; and
- ensure the recently established system for recording racist incidents in schools is thoroughly embedded and that good practice is shared.

SECTION 5: CORPORATE ISSUES

Introduction to corporate issues

159. The first inspection of the LEA was critical of the corporate context within which the education service was required to operate. The report referred to the absence of education from corporate values and priorities. Some schools considered that the council as a whole regarded education with “political indifference”. There was a view that the performance of the LEA should be measured in terms of services provided to schools rather than the educational outcomes achieved. The inspection report also indicated that attitudes might be changing.

160. Major change has taken place. The changed priority and commitment given to education over the past two years are in striking contrast to the past. There is now a high corporate priority to raise education standards and tackle under-achievement. The education department’s director is a key member of the chief executive’s team. The recent cabinet structure and scrutiny arrangements have brought a new focus. Annual corporate targets include key educational objectives, which are part of a coherent plan for ‘Civic Renewal’. Educational achievement is now seen to be a critical factor in meeting the aspirations of the council and its citizens.

161. During the past two years, there has been good progress in school improvement and the repositioning of the LEA. However, much of that has been to address past weaknesses and establish a service more able to add value to the work of schools and the achievement of pupils. Schools have been supportive to the recent change in priority given to education by the council. Nevertheless, some schools continue to lack the trust that commitment will be maintained. That does not detract from improvement in the corporate context for sustained change, which is now one where strengths clearly outweigh weaknesses.

Corporate planning

162. Corporate planning is satisfactory with few areas of major weakness. At the time of the last inspection it was judged to be poor, as planning failed to recognise the complex link between the activity of the education department and the attainment of pupils. The business planning process failed to address the implications of legislation for the local management of schools. With changes in both councillor and officer leadership, there has been considerable improvement during the past two years.

163. Plans are now more coherent and give appropriate priority to service objectives. From mid-2000 there has been radical change, leading to the launch in April 2001 of a major political initiative to promote ‘Civic Renewal’ that sets out the council’s strategic priorities. It includes an education guarantee to reposition the LEA in an effective strategic partnership with schools to raise educational standards and promote social inclusion. The high level commitment to change has been driving corporate planning during the past two years and has undoubtedly provided a framework within which the education service can improve.

164. There is now secure interconnection between the council's plans. The 'Civic Renewal' programme is at the heart of the Westminster Performance Plan and associated best value reviews. It is updated annually and incorporates the education (schools) service plan, which is linked to the EDP and shares its targets. Although planning processes are necessarily complex and some are still at an early stage, they are now broadly coherent and recognise the role of education priorities in the overall corporate context. There are programmes of monitoring by both officers and members.

Decision making

165. Corporate decision-making procedures, including those for finance are satisfactory, having been overhauled significantly in preparation for best value reviews. The council introduced a cabinet structure in September 2001, in which major decisions are taken openly and are subject to scrutiny arrangements. Preparation for corporate financial planning is thorough and engages a wide range of stakeholders. Discussion with members indicates support for the new cabinet structure as a means of improving decision-making.

166. Schools are increasingly involved in decision making through a variety of representative groups. In preparation for the 2002/03 budget, the chief executive has shown his commitment to service issues and discussed the overall financial position of the council with headteachers. Concerns remain among some schools about the transparency of budgetary arrangements, partly as a result of the ill-prepared introduction of fair funding two years ago. However, schools also recognise that members and officers are prepared to listen.

Leadership of officers and elected members

167. The quality of leadership provided by elected members is now consistently good. The leader of the council since 2000 was previously chairman of the education committee and led the authority through action planning after the first inspection. Elected leader in May 2000, he has given strong personal support to transforming the whole profile of education within the council. The cabinet member for schools is similarly committed. He has a clear view of priorities and works closely with the director and his staff. The education overview and scrutiny committee is chaired by an opposition member and has recently begun work. The committee includes headteachers, diocesan and parent representatives as well as elected members. Early meetings have addressed key issues of performance management and first indications are good.

168. The quality of leadership of some officers is good. It was judged satisfactory with few weaknesses at the last inspection, and therefore no detailed work has been undertaken. The director, with strong support from the chief executive, has given powerful personal leadership to the successful programme of change in the past two years. He has focused on the highest priorities: school improvement, the corporate context of the LEA and relationships with schools. There is much still to be done and he recognises the need to reshape his team to ensure consistently high levels of performance to address that challenge. Schools judge his leadership to be at least

satisfactory and particularly appreciate the ease of access to the director and his senior colleagues.

169. The quality of advice given by officers to elected members has significant strengths. It was judged satisfactory at the last inspection, and therefore has not been subject to detailed work. Members confirmed their continued confidence in the quality of advice.

Partnership

170. Partnership working is satisfactory. It was judged unsatisfactory at the time of the first inspection. The LEA works effectively with an increasing range of partners to raise achievement. The authority has just established the LSP, on which the director is a member. He is well placed to play a key role in the partnership on behalf of the wider education community.

171. There has been increased coherence in the work with the EAZ, the EiC partnership and the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP). Links with the two local Colleges of Further Education are adding an important dimension to post-14 planning and provision, in addition to being the home of the new interim professional development centre. Involvement with the Connexions partnership and the Learning and Skills Council is also being developed and is important for the future both for the LEA and its work with other London authorities. The director shows a personal commitment to such partnerships and the newly established school improvement board, which he chairs, provides an opportunity for joint planning and action. There are good relationships with the diocesan authorities. That is particularly significant since a majority of Westminster schools are voluntary aided. The diocese appreciates their relationship with the LEA, in particular the director, for the openness and accessibility of processes.

172. Partnerships which engage with a wider range of players are more mixed in quality. For example, the Westminster race equality council feel that the strategic direction of the authority has changed for the better but little impact is being felt yet at grassroots level. In an authority with over 60 per cent of pupils from minority ethnic origin, the development of closer links with communities is likely to provide an important dimension to raising achievement. The same is true of relations with the health authority, which are sound, but would benefit from more joint action. Partnership working with Social Services has featured improved joint planning. For example, the whole approach to children in public care, criticised in the first LEA inspection, has been transformed.

Recommendation

In order to improve the impact of partnership working:

- secure a clear direction and specific outcomes in respect of each partnership activity.

APPENDIX: RECOMMENDATIONS

These are listed in order of priority.

In order to improve support for special educational needs:

- draw up with schools a clear plan of action that sets out the way in which the LEA will move towards developing more inclusive provision. Clarify :
 - the amount and type of future specialist provision to be developed in special and mainstream schools;
 - the role of special schools in supporting inclusion and developing as centres of excellence; and
 - the time frame and resource implications for action.
- urgently finalise the criteria for identification of pupils with SEN in mainstream schools;
- provide mainstream schools with financial models of the intended banding system for allocating SEN resources;
- ensure delegation accurately reflects needs moderated against agreed criteria.
- monitor the use of delegated funds to ensure value for money;
- work with partner agencies to reduce the number of statutory assessments which exceed the 18 week exceptions limit;
- improve communication with parents/carers through ensuring information is available in minority ethnic languages; and
- set success criteria in service development plans which ensure they more accurately reflect the impact of the LEA's actions on pupil attainment.

In order to promote social inclusion:

- bring together the strands found in different LEA plans and make more explicit the deadlines for action; and
- improve communication and involvement of community groups to support key LEA aims.

In order to improve the supply of school places, as part of the school organisation plan:

- make clear in the plan how the demand for future places will be met;
- make explicit links in the school organisation plan to other LEA plans;
- ensure that future options for increasing the number of school places take account of the diversity of the community;
- improve links with other agencies such as housing, planning and health to inform pupil projected numbers; and
- take steps to ensure that the new vision and framework for secondary education is implemented by September 2004.

In order to improve provision for pupils who have no school place:

- urgently comply with the statutory requirement to place pupils not educated in mainstream or special schools on the role of a DFES registered pupil referral unit.

In order to improve support for attendance:

- monitor attendance by ethnicity so that secure data is available that can be used to establish improved dialogue with parents/carers from ethnic minority communities;
- investigate the links between poor attendance, bullying and lack of curriculum differentiation; and
- work with the police to establish a regular programme of truancy patrols.

In order to improve support for behaviour:

- work with schools to ensure that the 'tariff' for poor behaviour resulting in fixed term exclusion is similar across schools.

In order to support measures already in place to combat racism,

- draw up an action plan showing how the LEA will work with the black and ethnic minority communities in order to develop their capacity and increase their participation; and
- ensure the recently established system for recording racist incidents in schools is thoroughly embedded and that good practice is shared.

In order to further improve effectiveness and efficiency of monitoring of schools:

- establish a more differentiated approach to monitoring that ensures successful schools are visited less frequently;
- incorporate improved evidence for use in monitoring; and
- ensure all governing bodies receive notes about school visits.

In order to ensure more effective dissemination of good practice:

- define a clear strategy and clarify this with schools; and extend the means used, particularly via the Intranet.

In order to improve services to support school management:

- ensure that the services to schools board has clearly defined aims and objectives that focus on co-ordinating independent advice on the procurement of services to meet schools' needs, sets out responsibilities clearly and assists performance monitoring.

In order to improve financial management support for schools:

- work through the services to schools board to ascertain the level and nature of financial services required by schools and their procurement; and
- rectify errors in the payroll system.

In order to improve property services:

- develop appropriate guidance for schools so that they are clear where their responsibilities lie;
- support schools in the co-ordination of funding bids, developing coherent links between school plans and the authority's asset management plans; and
- ensure transparency in decision-taking on funding priorities.

In order to raise pupils' standards in ICT, improve the information available to teachers and give support for administration in school:

- develop a corporate, well co-ordinated and acceptable strategy;
- provide effective support to schools, including technical help for those schools that need it;
- develop an Intranet for schools which successfully links curriculum and administration needs; and
- provide a robust and consistent e-mail system which improves communication between schools and the LEA.

In order to promote the value of training in the LEA:

- develop a well-marketed programme that offers all staff a continuum of professional development using a wide range of providers and expertise.

In order to improve the focus on school improvement in all service units:

- ensure all service plans include specific measurable outcomes related to EDP2.

In order to improve the impact of partnership working:

- secure a clear direction and specific outcomes in respect of each partnership activity.

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